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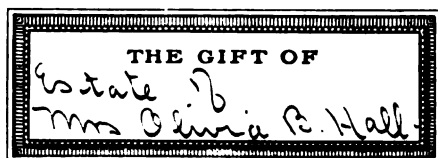
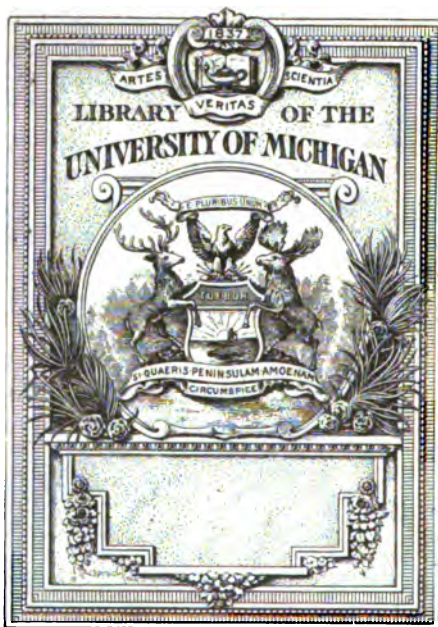
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THE
SPIRIT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

OR

THE REVELATION OF THE MISSION
OF CHRIST,

BY

A W O M A N.

"The words that I have spoken unto you are SPIRIT, and are LIFE."

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TO
MY OTHER SOUL, .
FROM WHOSE IMMORTAL LOVE
THE PERSECUTIONS OF EARTH HAVE FAILED
TO SEPARATE ME,
I INSCRIBE THIS,
OUR CHILD!

THE POWER OF SOUL IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE HUMAN RACE.

THE ETERNAL SOUL.

"IN THE BEGINNING — GOD."

THE EMANATION.

"THE SPIRIT OF GOD MOVED UPON THE FACE OF THE DEEP."

THE MATERIALISATION.

"MAN, FROM THE DUST OF THE EARTH."

THE UNFOLDMENT.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU."

THE PERFECT CONCEPTION.

"BEHOLD! A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE."

THE REVELATION.

"THE SEED OF THE WOMAN SHALL BRUISE THE SERPENT'S
HEAD."

THE REGENERATION.

"THE TWO SHALL BE ONE."

THE SUBLIMATION.

"THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH."

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PREFACE.

HITHERTO the voice of Man alone has been heard in the interpretation of what is deservedly called *Sacred Writ*, and he has elaborated creeds and revisions of the text. To penetrate into its Soul, the inspiration of Woman is required, for, through her being, as in the past, the light of the New Age must dawn.

Beneath the very altars of the churches, within the very pages of the books which have been used for almost all things except their true objects, lives concealed a Truth so holy, so divine, so absolutely consecrated to Human Liberty, that the hour has come, in an age so devoted to the idea of freedom, when it should be made manifest. At this time, when the materialist, or the student of the mere external records of the past, is endeavouring to prove that the pathetic and incomparable life-story of **THE MAN** is a legend or a myth, it is more essential than it ever was before, that, for the sake of its sublime principles, the reality and possibility of his history and life should be demonstrated.

That this history has been terribly misused, perverted, and degraded by religious bigots, and blind and unspiritual men, through centuries of ignorance resulting from lack of the general development necessary to understand the true work of the Master, is, indeed, no argument whatever against its eternal power and beauty.

The Man of Nazareth, was, in truth, the illustration of a higher law, of the power of the Soul in divine parentage and purified organisation, and from his first breath to his last, he, among all men, thought, spoke, and lived in a freedom which puts to shame the man-worship still alive in the present day, and the mental slavery which bows before the external letter of the records of his life, and the labours of his followers.

An illustration of what man truly is, a representation of the spiritual forces of the planet in their perfection, and embodied in a single human being, was as necessary to the progress and eternal welfare of this world as the law of gravitation or of evolution. Therefore it was, that, at a particular epoch of its history, when Oriental religions had waned, and before European civilisation had been, or could have been, born, the incarnation of this strong Soul became a necessity. Through the recondite law of his being, he unveiled the ancient and esoteric mysteries of spiritual power, the beauty of moral greatness, and the glory of the highest immortality. He was the great born *Master*, the adept, the living key of the work of the *illuminati* of an older age, the "corner-stone" of the astro-masonic and mathematically constructed Temple, — the mysterious stronghold of initiation and victory, of prophecy and progress, of the silent Nile, — and over him, the chosen one of the angel-world, death and hell had no power.

He trod truly on the "serpent" of matter; he cast down the curse of the subjection of woman, for his mother was free, pure, sovereign, and inspired in her maternity; he was the prediction of the coming race, which "toils not, nor spins;" the "salvation" he taught was the salvation of deliverance from disease, crime, and death itself; he was the Christ, because he demonstrated a law which would, beyond the age of Intellect, develop the age of Soul.

Scattered among the time-worn records known as the "New Testament" are to be found the veiled truths; and yet they are only concealed to the outer reason: to the spirit they shine with the star of prophecy, and reveal the future in the story of the past.

When woman becomes free, and is spiritually united in perfect harmony to man, in marriage which is not of sense, but of soul, then the arch-mystery of nature will be revealed, and the apparently mysterious laws and principles manifested in Jesus of Nazareth will reappear in manhood spiritually organised, pure, capable of direct control over his material surroundings, and of exercising the power of Will. Call it Christ-age, Millen-

ium, the Angelic Era of Man, what you will, it is as much a science, as much the result of the forces of this earth, as the age of the amphibian, and it is on its way. The condition will, as before, be earned; it will be the fruit of sacrifice, struggle, martyrdom of the past, — first won by the few, then by the many. The signs of its advent, everywhere prophesied, are even now everywhere around us.

They who would follow in the Master's steps must possess their souls in freedom; he asks no worship; he seeks no slavery; he wills at last to be understood.

"Strong Son of God! Immortal Love!" — the Light, the Pathway, the Resurrection, and the Life! — again wilt thou shine forth in the soul of Man and Woman, and show that through spiritual fatherhood and motherhood in those whom God hath indeed "joined together," death itself shall disappear!

It is the scientific completion of the work of Christ. Man may have been the builder of the church of the hour in which he has stood as self-elected priest; woman, in the coming era, must be the architect of the real and eternal temple of humanity, in which "they that worship the Father shall worship Him in spirit and in truth," — calling themselves neither of this church nor that, frequenting neither "this mount, nor Jerusalem," because old and external things will have passed away, and the interior life will have become perfect, and in harmony with the divine laws. It is "the one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

"And him evermore I behold
Walking in Galilee,
Through the corn-field's waving gold,
In hamlet, in wood, and in wold,
By the shores of the Beautiful Sea.
He toucheth the sightless eyes;
Before him the mournings flee;
To the dead, he sayeth, Arise!
To the faithful, follow me!
And that voice still soundeth on
From the centuries that are gone
To the centuries that shall be!"

The Man and his Mother remain for all time the archetypes of sacred truths, of imperishable forces, of the highest and noblest of human conditions. From idolatrous worship of the individuals, men will be led to study the possibilities of their own nature, and the radiance of the long-crucified Christ within.

With reverence do we salute thee, Mother! With joy do we behold thee emerging from the silence and the shadow, O Man of Men! In thee, Man and Woman are equal. It was the divine Love of thy nature which crowned thee at last with Immortality!

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THE WORK OF JESUS OF NAZARETH,
THE CHRIST.

In the Name of God, against the last enemy!

THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE INCARNATION.

*Concerning the holy incarnation of the Angel-Soul
known on earth as Jesus of Nazareth.*

ALL thoughtful observers of nature in its widest aspects will notice that planetary life seems subject to the law of periodicity, — part of interplanetary relations, and part of the organic law of our own globe.

This is manifested in the seasons, day and night, the tides, the conditions of gestation, and functional activity in physical life, and in its varied stages of growth and development. None attempt to deny the all-powerful solar and lunar influences, and the time will come when the more occult forces exercised by the planets, and which were known to the ancient sages and astrologers, and their peculiar magnetic sway, will be acknowledged as freely as the external science of astronomy, since the entire solar system is linked together by a common origin.

Connected with all these manifestations of an ever-increasing ebb and flow, and flux and influx, is seen the grander sweep of spiritual development, which, although subject to steady growth at all times, is marked likewise by cycles, or what may be termed Messianic pe-

riods, in which, however unobserved at the particular date, some potent spiritual force, long struggling to be born, appears at last in a certain completeness, or embodiment, and influences a long succeeding age.

There have been several such periods in the world's history since man became ripe for such methods of enlightenment, and produced the conditions which called each forth,—six great ones altogether,¹—of which the last and all-important one was that of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

This life was manifested at one of the greatest crises in the history of man, it may be said the greatest, and was centred where two of the most marked nations of the earth, Egypt and Palestine, were developed. Both, first one, and subsequently the other, had been concentrated sites of spiritual power, and when the great life of the one had degenerated, the other was called forth to reconstruct certain religious truths in a separate sphere. The influence of Egypt, indeed, unknown to us, is still felt throughout human thought; its original religious conceptions were of the most lofty kind, and its wisdom, at that period necessarily known only to the initiated few, such as might instruct modern science. The seers of Israel, whose inspirational utterances are now read with conventional reverence in the churches, could never have raised their voices among the people but for contact with the ideas of the eternal, the true, the right, the just, the immortal, which, lost in a later age, were once the clear light of the earlier religious beliefs of Egypt. And the Scripture history of the Pentateuch, mixed as it is with legendary details, or ordinary incidents represented as supernatural, clearly point to the origin of the reformatory revival undertaken by Moses, who was acquainted with the ancient wisdom, and was led of the spirit, however deeply his work became encrusted by the innumerable rites and

¹ The missions of Osiris, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Jesus, all of whose lives were adapted to different epochs and races, each became centres of spiritual life for humanity.

observances, also of Egyptian origin, of the Jewish priests of a later day. None have ever disputed that Palestine was the special religious nation of the earth, and that, in that land, notwithstanding many barbarisms incident to the times, there was, for centuries, never wanting a prophet or a seer, stronger than the priest, who arose to appeal to the people with his free and lofty utterances on the one God and the human soul. There are songs of David, and flaming strains of Isaiah, which will live as long as appreciation of the good and the beautiful exists in the heart of man. They possess the immortality of the *spirit*, in which is a life which can never die.

The crisis which has been referred to occurred when this psychic life of the past was dying, or wrapped in the cerements of exterior forms, — when the Roman empire was destined to wane, and when the elements of European civilization were about to be out-wrought from semi-barbarian hordes, which required some powerful and common faith to preserve them from disintegration; for nothing holds men together like a common religion, and even a bloody crusade is a degree better than selfish raids of robbery and murder. Moreover, out of these varied races, superior organisations were to be developed, through which mind could operate, bearing in due season the ripe fruit of the knowledge of steam and electricity, until at last the age of Mind should be succeeded by that of Soul.

The signs of the times, known far and wide in the East, pointed, in the planets, in the condition of men, in the prophecies of the seers of many lands, to a Messianic period; and the age was ripe for the concentrated manifestation of spiritual strength which may burst forth as the flower of every developing world, — which is its CHRIST, and which upholds the ideal standard of its race for all time. The guiding Powers, to whom past, present, and future are as an open book, realised the expectations of the Jews, oppressed by a foreign yoke, and the necessities of man; of the desire for a deliver-

ance and a king in Palestine,¹ and the wider cry for light arising in a thousand dark places in the earth; and they answered those voiceless prayers with a wisdom which, dwelt upon as it has been through centuries of preaching, has never been understood in its fulness. They designed to give, and they did give, in the land of monotheism, a lesson, a Living Word, which should be so many-sided, so potent, so inspired, so free, and so sublime, that it would teach the ages, and rise above all endeavours to misinterpret it, to discard it, to undervalue it, and to disbelieve it, and in which the prophetic myths of the past, of "the woman" and "the child," now recalled in such a shallow manner to explain the existence of the Gospels, or such parts of them as might possibly be so explained, should express their great significance. Look deep enough, and that which seems a myth, a world-wide legend, a scripture of the skies, is "a voice crying in the wilderness," which is the herald of some eternal truth, born in a moment of inspiration, and winged with life to live in many forms in the minds of millions. A great event is, indeed, vaguely shadowed forth in many phases of religion, and for centuries before it occurs.

Every lesson that could teach man how to conquer self, and to conquer matter, was to be taught. The kingdom, so eagerly looked for by Jewish priests and rabbies, and which had been the hope of Israel for more than fifteen hundred years, was to be that of the interior life, — the royalty of the spirit, strong in the strength of love, and the divine law of its incarnation, — and it was to crush and cast out all the selfish expectations of that time or any other. And this was the design: —

Woman was to be an instrument in the work.

She was to become a mother in pure liberty, which acknowledged neither human laws nor rites of priests.

The very birth of the Man was to be a hushed-up reproach.

¹ Tacitus speaks of the ancient belief of the people of Judea, that they would become masters of the whole world; and it must have been well known at this period of their history.

His cradle would be a manger.

A carpenter's workshop would be the scene of his childhood.

His home would be among a despised people, and in an uncultured province.

Seclusion was to be his lot until manhood.

The knowledge of his mission would be awakened by a reformer outside the Jewish Church.

That reformer would be a martyr, who would taste of prison and of death.

Evil influences would assail him, though they should not prevail.

Dishonour and insult were to attend the success of his three years' mission.

He was to associate with publicans and sinners, and women of no repute.

To outrage orthodox and revered beliefs.

To be charged with selfishly seeking an earthly crown, while absolutely disappointing the self-same persons in his work for a kingdom not of this world.

To be homeless, doubted by his own family, and to know not where to lay his head.

To be called "mad," a "deceiver," a "Sabbath-breaker," a "blasphemer," and one in league with evil spirits.

To be betrayed as disreputable by an apparent follower.

To be forsaken of every friend, and falsely accused.

To be disgraced and convicted as a common criminal, and to be crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem between two poor thieves.

And to achieve the result of the Sacrifice in the eternal victory of the Soul.

After this it is almost unnecessary to point out that the details of the life of the Nazarene, as an ideal man, contained a symbolical history of the destiny of the human race.

The virgin woman represents the soul of man.

The visit of the spirit, the growth of seership which awakens her consciousness.

The immaculate conception, the infusion of the spiritual into the external, vitalising it with new life.

The birth of the Christ, the spiritualisation of man, or the "seed of the woman," who conquers the "dragon," or physical matter and its evils.

The voice of the Baptist, the recognition of the coming development of man through prophecy and minds free from creeds.

The wilderness, the lonely warfare of the spiritual before it can enter on its divine mission.

The works of love and mercy, the living and awakening power of soul.

The trial, the arraignment of the illuminated soul by the reason.

The crucifixion, its temporary rejection and final struggle with the blindness of the material nature.

The manifestation or at-one-ment, the union of the twain, the harmony of the inner and the outer, the open proof of immortality, and of the way of life.

The ascension, the passing beyond the sphere of planetary life and the eternal reign of the soul.

All nature tells this beautiful story. The very husk of the seed dissolves as it bursts from the dark soil with its new germ of life. The very winter heralds its victory. The death of the body sets free the spirit. And at last the penetration of the physical by the spiritual produces the final liberation of man.

Let us turn to the familiar pages which contain the outline of the life-story of Jesus of Nazareth.¹

His birth was spiritual. His mother, to whom the prophecy that a Jewish maiden should become the mother of a Deliverer was well-known, was chosen for her pure and psychic organisation. She was virgin in body and soul, filled with holy and unselfish aspirations for her people, and possessed of those gifts of

¹ Throughout this work the revised version of the New Testament, published, according to the current chronology, in 1831, has been used.

seership which enable man to perceive and converse with spiritual beings. Forewarned of her glorious mission, she experienced neither fear nor doubt when the hour arrived in which the incarnation of the Christ the angel of the planet, was to be effected. She was so organised as to be capable of expressing the highest law of motherhood, — the motherhood of inspiration, — and, in a moment of exalted receptivity, through spiritual fatherhood of the purest and most powerful order, and under the most inspiring and illuminating conditions, the great foundation-stone of the coming work was laid. No man was sufficiently interiorly developed to become the father of the child; the parentage was immortal, and expressed a divine power which exists in that rare marriage, not of earth, in which the masculine and feminine souls are one spirit.

The sustaining friendship of Joseph was necessary to protect the virgin mother, around whom beautiful influences circled, and who was kept apart from the world. He was told that the son she would bring forth must be called "Jesus," the meaning of which is "deliverer." Every stage of her motherhood was full of purity, and the command given to Joseph by their holy guides would have been of the same order if he had been the father of a child. To become a true mother, the being of woman should be held sacred after conception is known to have taken place; she is a priestess; she is in a creative condition; pure and devoted love for her and the little life she is developing should be wrapped around her; she should be free and sovereign until the child is born. Yes; and if the children of earthly passions continue to be brought forth, if marriage, so called, continues to be desecrated, woman, in the name of humanity, will have to wrest her motherhood from the chains of every man-made law, and stand FREE, as was Mary! It will be her duty. She will not dare to do it unless she is pure and filled with the highest attraction for the man; she will be a monogamist in her inmost thoughts; and she will be

faithful to the divine law which can produce a "holy family." In the presence of woman and her sacred capacities, governments and churches are at this hour alike "weighed in the balances and found wanting."

The home was at Nazareth; the birth was at Bethlehem, the "city of David,"¹ and the journey of Joseph and Mary to record their names in the census for taxation of their ancestral place, resulted in the child being born in a condition of homelessness. On earth, indeed, there never could have been a real home for him. It is said that the mother sheltered in one of the numerous caves in the neighbourhood of the town, which had been used as a stable, as the *khan* was already full on her arrival. About the same period, the birth of John, the reformer, also very marked, occurred. He was born with a very spiritual organisation, and his work was preparatory and essential to the work of Christ. Of him it was foretold that he would possess the "spirit and power of Elijah," or, in other words, be a remanifestation of that strong soul. His mother, also, was a devout woman, and the father was something higher than a mere priest. Elizabeth, having her spiritual vision opened, at once recognised Mary and the light which was to shine through her, and together they mutually strengthened each other, and drew around them influences which were of service in the coming work. Mary truly declared that "all generations should call her blessed," and the prophecy made to her by the angelic visitor that of "the kingdom" of the child there "should be no end," was nothing more than the truth. Equally true, though mournful, was the prophetic utterance of Simeon, who told the young mother that the child was "set for the falling and rising of many in Israel, for a sign which would be spoken against," (the Cross) "and that a sword should pierce through her own soul also."

¹ Calculated, so far as can be ascertained, to have taken place about the year 750 A.U.C. (in the reign of the Roman emperor Cæsar Augustus) and therefore about four years before the commencement of the "Christian Era." This would make 1885 the *real* date of 1881, which is the close, not the beginning, of the perihelia of the planets.

Were these visions and prophecies miraculous? Not in the least. They occurred then, as they occur now, as they have, indeed, occurred more or less among all races, according to a natural law. The gifts of prophecy and of seership, or clairvoyance, are based on a true science of man. In a more developed condition, man will see both with the outward, and inner or spiritual eye. With the one he may see the skies and the earth, with the other the secret of the common flower, or the hidden life-story of his fellow-man.

The angelic guides of Mary and Joseph did not interfere with their presentation of the child in the Jewish temple, nor their acceptance of the usual Jewish rites, although his work was to be such as would completely discard the ceremonies of the past. Through his own strength it was seen that the child would grow out of them, and his mother and foster-father, although realising that he was the "anointed one," had no conception of the character of the work, or of its real victory. It brought him in contact with the beautiful influences of the aged seer, Simeon, who had been impressed with the great truth that Israel's deliverer was at hand, and taking the child in his arms, his inner vision was opened, and his lips were moved to utter the words of the spirit, that the "salvation" was for all people, for "a light of revelation to the Gentiles." Strange words for a Jew! Too strange, indeed, for any of the mortals present to understand. Woman, also, was called upon to deliver her inspired message within the temple walls to one who was destined not only to rend them asunder, but eventually to deliver her from all bondage. Anna, the prophetess, thanked God, as she also recognised the long-promised redemption.

Nor were these the only witnesses. A beautiful vision, accompanied by songs and strains of rejoicing, had swept before the astonished gaze of the humble shepherds of Bethlehem's quiet fields.

The seers of the East, who had seen the "*star*,"—in other words, who were able to read the planetary

signs denoting a marked birth, and the indications of a new era, visited Jerusalem, and found out the child from the prophecies in the sacred writings.¹ Was such a recognition from far-off lands possible? Certainly. There are always some who know the hour, and can point to the truth amid universal blindness.

Meanwhile, the shadow of the cross, which was veiled from all, had already risen over the young life. The evil-minded Herod the Great, the ruler of Judæa, whose life was stained with deeds of unusual cruelty and vice, had heard reports that a child had been born who would be "king of the Jews," and, on consulting the rabbies, ascertained that the birthplace would be Bethlehem, and he at once issued orders for the massacre of all the male children under two years old. Probably not more than a score of children perished in a town of that size; and, viewed among the other acts of Herod, this must have appeared an almost insignificant occurrence. The angel-guides, ever watchful, ever strong, warned the foster-father before the decree was made known, and bade the seers of the East silently retire, and the little family left Palestine and took refuge in Egypt. The cruel attempt was thus not only frustrated, like all such endeavours to crush and destroy a holy work, but was of advantage to the child, young as he was. For a lengthy period he lived amid the powerful psychic influences with which ancient Egypt had been literally baptised, and his first footsteps were guided along the banks of the peaceful Nile, and under the shadow of the sealed and silent pyramid. He returned to the scene of his future mission, not only strengthened in spirit and body, but surrounded by a power which had penetrated the ages, and which was unconsciously illuminating his inmost soul. "*Out of Egypt have I called my son.*" And Herod, who had sought to destroy the life of one

¹ The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, were such as Eastern sages would be likely to present, and symbolized, life, power, and death, which were prophetic in their nature. Legend has happily described the men as a Hindoo, an Egyptian, and a Greek, for the herald of the spiritual race was the revealer of the wisdom of these great nations of antiquity.

who was incarnated to annihilate the power of corruption, perished a premature prey to it in an illness which was of exceptional misery and suffering.

The land of Palestine was then divided into provinces governed by his sons; Galilee, by Herod Antipas; Judæa and Samaria, by Archelaus; and the district beyond Jordan, by Philip. The union of Judæa and Samaria was, in itself, a deep insult to the Jews, who looked upon the Samaritans as outcasts, "Assyrians," who had despised the customs of their fathers.

Not only the boyhood, but the early manhood of Jesus was passed in peaceful seclusion, and common occupations. Spiritual in nature and organisation, he was carefully held in the strong sympathetic vital magnetism of harmonious family life; and, in order that he might be more fully sustained, brothers and sisters were born to him, of his mother and the man he long looked upon as father. Woman had not yet completely entered into the work of immortality; it was concentrated in a Man; she had vindicated a great law, but the hour was not ripe for it to be unveiled to the people. She had manifested ideal motherhood; it was not given to her to manifest the perfect ideal of wifehood. The being of Mary was a silent, sacred altar of sacrifice, rather than a throne of perfect victory. The son of power born, she retired among domestic duties, and fresh relations, and we hear no word from her of the share she possessed in demonstrating the divine possibilities which exist in man.

Nazareth was situated in Galilee, where many Gentiles resided, including even Greeks, and this fact tended to broaden the sympathies of the boy, whose love of humanity was inborn, and who intuitively took the side of the unjustly oppressed and despised. Its mixed population was in fact regarded almost as foreign by the Jews in general, and a peculiar brogue marked the Galilean native wherever he went. Amid social surroundings such as these, the beautiful flowers, and birds, and atmosphere of the place, he dwelt and pondered in

peace, increasing daily in a latent strength which was to come forth at the appointed hour with sudden and wonderful radiance. The long and gradual development showed the thoroughly human nature of the man, and the internal growth of a strong and pure spirit is a mightier force than a score of so-called miraculous events. In the legends of writers of a later period, such as are contained in the "Gospel of the Infancy," we see the apocryphal character of the records, unspiritual, external, and false to the ideal which the angel-world designed.

The visit of Jesus to the temple is the only recorded occurrence at this time, and it is typical of several experiences through which he passed. He weighed and pondered over the religion of his country not a little; and, when opportunity occurred, was eager to discuss the subject with those who were considered learned men. These stirrings of his spirit led him on one occasion into a prolonged discussion at Jerusalem, which disclosed to him his own capacity to penetrate into the heart of the dogmas, beliefs, and observances of the past, and on hearing the anxious remonstrances of his mother, who saw not the direction of his beautiful mission in life, he told her that he had begun to work for God. "*The Father's business*" had loomed before him; to enlighten and free the souls of men, and to teach them the divine nature of love. These visits to Jerusalem were like the seed sown in a fruitful soil, which were destined to bear fruit at last, an hundred-fold. The Scriptures, the Mishna, and the Talmud, the usual studies of a Jewish youth, were all silently weighed and thought over by Jesus, so far as he became acquainted with them in the retired home of his boyhood, although letters, scholarship, elaborate researches and criticisms of texts were not for him. He knew enough to recognise the truth of his own great inspirations.

CHAPTER II.

THE AWAKENING.

AT about the age of thirty years, selected as a period of mental and physical ripeness, an event took place which was designed to bring Jesus into the field of public work. John, the finely-organised son of Zacharias, had at last come forth from his remote home to carry out the reformatory crusade for which he was born, and which had been destined to prepare the way for the more concentrated and powerful mission of Jesus. He commenced his operations in the free air of the wilderness, thereby avoiding the spheres of the large towns, and inspired of the spirit,—it might more truthfully be said, of noble spirits,—he gave voice to utterances similar to those which had blazed forth from the prophets of old, and enjoined the people, who speedily heard of him and thronged to witness an unusual spectacle, to *live* worthily. There had been talk long enough among his creed-bound hearers, rites enough, ceremonies enough. What were their lives? He was also influenced to speak of the Coming One, through whom men and beliefs would be “weighed in the balances,” and judged as they were, or were not, found wanting. The chaff that was given in the place of grain,—of living bread for the people,—this approaching spiritual fire would, by its flame of truth, speedily destroy. The only rite he seemed to value was that of baptism, as a sort of recognition of reformed life, and higher aspirations. It was his signet-mark on those who followed him, and, in an Eastern climate especially, of value as regarded health, cleanliness, and purity. It was very radical, very contrary to customary Jewish usages, and a silent condem-

nation of the existing church. But a great spiritual force was around the man; he had a mind which dared to think for itself; he fearlessly spoke as he was influenced; and it was the sphere of all others with which the guardian spirits desired to bring Jesus in contact. He felt attracted by the reports of John; there was an inner harmony which drew them together, and, after listening to him with deep sympathy and interest, he came forward and requested baptism of the man who had been prophesying his own work. John had indeed seen a vision of Jesus, and was informed that he would recognise him by the sign of a dove, as a symbol of spiritual power. Possessing, as the baptist did, the voice of the prophet, and the eye of a seer, he instantly felt the nature of the presence before him, and told him, truly, that he had no need of baptism, for he possessed that which was higher than any earthly signs. "This is the deliverer!" said he; "and it was in order that he should be known to Israel that I have been sent forth. He is the one foretold to me by the spirit."

Jesus, however, wisely insisted on it, and the simple initiation produced conditions which enabled his unseen guardians to pour upon him a mighty influx, which, as it were, illuminated his whole soul, and made him ready to enter likewise on an undertaking which would draw forth and tax every power that was within him. To the mortals near, neither voice nor vision were made known, but to the opened eye of Jesus the bright and beautiful beings around him appeared in perfect clearness, and light of surpassing strength and purity fell upon his head in the mystic form of a dove, — a symbol of Peace, if not for him, for others for whom he was born. He knew himself, — knew that he, the obscure Nazarene, had been called from seclusion for the sake of the people, knew that he was the unknown, unrecognised fulfilment of Israel's prophecies, for a voice of power had spoken to him and said "Thou art called of God! Thou art sealed! Go forth! Thou art the MAN!" Who of heaven's workers on earth

have ever resisted this solemn appeal? Impelled by an irresistible impulse they have left home, friends, love, reputation, happiness, and, though it has led them to the cross, or to the prison, or to the stake, have consecrated their all to human needs and welfare! Each has said, "In the name of God, I come!" Upheld by angels, and facing all that men, in their blindness, could do to kill the truth they represented, they have been strong to endure. Not one of these "little ones" has perished. To be on the side of truth, though it bring martyrdom, is to be victorious. Thrice called was the chosen one of Israel; thrice consecrated in that hour by the blue waters of the Jordan, and he was ready for the brief, arduous, and decisive contest of the three years' reformatory work.

There remained now but one thing to do: to give this pure, spiritual, illuminated man an armour, as it were, of steel, through some ordeal corresponding to the ancient preliminary methods of initiation, and out of which he would come both doubly strong and completely educated. The wilderness of the records in the Gospels has been purposely veiled. It was the wilderness of the innermost being of Jesus. He was permitted to enter it, — nay driven forth in it by the decree of heaven. He was about to meet men and women, with all their different spheres, and he was destined to work among women of evil reputation. Whatever human feeling there was in him attracting him specially to womanhood, had to be overcome, not because celibacy is a divine condition, for it is the reverse, but because for him on earth there was no mate, no peer, and his work was limited and confined to his own nature for the best and wisest purposes.

A spiritual race could not at that time have lived. The elements of the earth were not sufficiently refined for such a consummation. Yet Jesus had to understand and penetrate the human heart, not through mere vision, — for that, however clear, is not insight, — but thorough realisations of its nature in his own conscious-

ness, and these were wrought out through his exquisitely sensitive and susceptible organisation, by psychological reflections powerfully thrown upon him. The "forty days" represented a period of awakening manhood, of tempting forces, of trial, of suffering, and of victory. They were the ripening of the Messianic work, prophetic of it, and emblematic in their character. He felt the *hunger*, the deprivation, the loneliness; he listened to the inner voice, "Thou art for the people! Thou art wedded to thy cause; self must die in thy mission, and the truth born of thee will be the truth of Immortality!" The angel-voice triumphed, and were men born of the spirit instead of the flesh, it ever would triumph. Earthly marriage is no rest; and they, like Jesus, would wait in peace until they recognised the love of the soul.

Moreover, through the higher law of his being, Jesus possessed a peculiar power over matter. As a thaumaturgist who avoided reform and burning questions, he might have ranked among the kings of the earth, and wealth and fame would have been assured him; but he was bidden to consecrate this gift, one day to be common to all men, to humanitarian work, healing, feeding, sustaining, and helping others. The "kingdoms of the world and the glories of them" were not for him who was to found the eternal kingdom of the spirit.

These ordeals passed through, not amid the brotherhoods of the Essenes, but by an initiation of which his own nature and angelic guardians were the sources, the interior power of Jesus became more fully developed, penetrating, and highly spiritualising his whole organisation. He was in harmony with his divine selfhood. It was truly "with power" that he returned to Galilee. But this very condition necessitated his being surrounded by a circle of persons possessed of vital magnetism, who would furnish the connecting link between him and the people, and enable him to encounter the strain of contact with their inferior and more material

order of life. The forces of these persons were also necessary to him on those occasions when he exerted his power of will over matter. He had become almost as a spirit, and these elements, which were essential to him, were such as spirits require in their manifestations to mortals. The study of psychological laws is absolutely indispensable to those who desire to truly understand the nature of Jesus of Nazareth, even although he demonstrated in his own person a higher spiritual law than has yet been made known to the world. He was not a spirit, but a spiritual man; yet those who realise the difference between the spirit disembodied and embodied will most clearly understand the powers, possibilities, and limitations of a man in the psychic perfection of his nature. The eloquent and elaborate "Lives of Christ," so called, written by divines in this century, are, to a large extent, useless, and even worse than useless. — misleading to those who read them. Spiritual manifestations, according to higher or fixed laws, are represented as miracles; clear vision, the clear-seeing, or *clairvoyant* eye, as an unparalleled gift; will-power over the interior forces of nature, by which the exterior forms may be modified according to certain laws, a natural attribute of the perfect man, or the born adept, as mysterious attributes of Deity; the powerful inspiration of a soul strong in its purity and freedom, as the oracles of the Creator of the universe; the cross as a sacrifice of blood in atonement for human "sin;" the resurrection as an event secondary in importance, which was to affix a seal on the Trinitarian belief. These errors result from lack of inspiration, information, insight, and ripeness of soul, and not from those invaluable records which were purposely given to a few persons after the return of Jesus to the spiritual world. The masculine mind, too merely intellectual to seize the truth in its real sublimity and glory, has set forth Christ either as Deity itself, or as the myth of a "superstitious" day. Unless woman, the mother, speaks, knowing the divine power sealed

within her, the light which is the light of ages will never shine upon our planet. At this hour, our race is perishing between the two grossly material powers which seek for dominion—the church of the past, with its dead creeds and superstitions, and the perverted science which ignores the knowledge of the soul, and the great realities of nature. Silence is death.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST EFFORTS.

THE immediate relations of Jesus were not suited for close connection with him in his missionary work. He required the fresh spheres of some persons who would be acted upon by the "legion of angels" around him, as well as capable of remaining in close sympathy with himself. As yet, he was but little known, although John had recognised him, and spoken of him, and addressed him in language such as would be most easily understood,—as "the *lamb*, who would take away the sins of the world;" who would be sacrificed for the sake of opening a new pathway,—a pathway to the higher life, which is pure and sinless, because the divine spirit of love dwells in its atmosphere.

Some of the companions called were obscure, and did little or nothing for the work beyond sustaining him; some became martyrs for the truth, and two or three played important parts in his tragic history. There need only be named John, James, Peter, Judas; each called for a purpose, and each left to choose the true or false, according to his own nature, and the law of his own organisation. The Master influenced all, and the most opposite of persons; he dominated none, and those around him he desired to be as free in mind as he was himself. Nearly all were in a humble station of life, for those who had most to consider in the way of earthly interests, and personal influence, would naturally be the last to support the radical and revolutionary ideas which issued from his lips. It is not easy for men to endorse what cuts the ground from under their own feet, and the high priests and bishops of firmly-established orders are the last to welcome, even to see, the

truth, or the necessity of great reforms. They are chained to the past by a thousand links, and for the future they lack the seer's intuition, and the seer's eye. Who but men whom their own circumstances and many struggles had, to a large extent, taught to be liberal, would have attached themselves to the Nazarene, — a man without a single condition of earthly power, and who possessed only a beautiful strong presence, an earnest and piercing eye, and a noble and true soul, in which love and wisdom abode as in a temple? Invited by his personal sphere, they were drawn to Jesus by a belief in his assertion that he had a great work to carry out, which would result in victory; nor did they realise until its close that it would be through a martyr pathway. So fully did they credit his words that they anticipated his public recognition as the Messiah, and it was through the bitter disappointment of these hopes, that one, less fortunate in his nature than the others, lost trust, and faith, and fidelity, and fell under the influence of a deadly spiritual opposition.

The four classes of persons in the time of Jesus were indeed typical of the attitude of men towards truth in all ages, — the Pharisees, the Saducees, the "publicans and sinners," and the few disciples.

"We have found him, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote!" was the enthusiastic declaration of Philip to Nathaniel (or Bartholomew). And when Nathaniel saw him he was deeply impressed with his presence and his words. He was convinced by the clear vision of Jesus, who, however, told him that this was but a small matter compared to what his own opened sight might discern, namely, that he was accompanied and led by angels for an angelic work.

Very shortly after this occurred the event of the marriage at Cana. The first marked spiritual operation of Christ took place in the despised province of Galilee. Some of his followers were present, and helped to furnish the necessary conditions: the occasion was harmonious, and full of pleasant and genial feeling; and

the manifestation itself demanded less exertion of strength than others which subsequently occurred. Wine was required for the guests, which had, by a designed oversight, been forgotten, and the stone jars having been filled with the element of water as a basis, it was acted upon by a powerful influence from the will of Jesus, aided by guardian spirits, until it acquired the taste and hue of wine. Faith was there,—the faith of his mother, as well as that of many loved companions,—and the effect was produced without effort, without loss of vitality, and with ease. An illustration of this law may be seen in our own day, in the transformation of water as regards hue and taste, through human magnetic power, or even the direct power of a spirit. Some who read these pages will understand to what allusion is made. But, in the case of Jesus, in every instance of this kind, he exerted his own will, and projected his living soul-force upon the passive essences which exist within all material things.

His presence at a marriage, at the very commencement of his reformatory career, showed that his sympathies were certainly not in the direction of celibacy, the temporary necessity of his own life while on earth. How could they be, in any person worthy of being called a great priest of humanity? It does not seem that he had the slightest connection with one of the great parties of his time, who represented the conventual system,—the Essenes. He saw deeper and he knew more. The male and female principles range from the atom to the archangel,—to the Central Soul itself,—and through their union comes, the life of the universe. What is called celibacy in man or woman, is an accident, a non-creative pause or hiatus in the incarnate life, out of which it must progress to union either here or in a higher sphere. While, therefore, the nature of his work held Jesus apart and alone, the angelic beings who guided his footsteps, led him, first of all, to the glad gathering connected with the marriage of man and woman, the first and foremost of social

institutions, and, in its highest sense, the most divine.

There are numberless incidents in the life of Jesus at this time which are unrecorded. Those only were written of which were most typical of his career, and it may be as well to follow the ordinary succession of events as commonly understood. They are, in the main, fairly correct, allowing for minor differences among the various writers; and the contents of the four gospels unquestionably form a broad harmony, let who will dwell on small details rather than the marked and clearly-depicted whole. Those very differences have occasioned a mental liberation, which has made it easy to make known the truth.

Powerfully impelled to begin to teach the people, as John had done, one of his first eager attempts to reach them was at Capernaum, where he endeavoured to enlighten them as to this kingdom for which almost all were looking in expectation. "The kingdom of *heaven*," said he, "the spiritual kingdom, is at hand." He spoke at first in a Jewish synagogue, hoping thereby to connect in the minds of the people the prophecies of the past with the work of the present; and, illuminated as he was, we can well imagine how the "dry bones" shook with a descending spirit of life, and in what complete contrast were his utterances, given with the authority of truth and inspired conviction, from those of the scribes. "What is this?" said his hearers to each other, as they listened, — "a new teaching?" It was a bold attempt. Later on, he left the synagogues, full of the psychic influences of the past, for the mountain-slopes and the open valleys which breathed a freer air.

A much longer journey was next undertaken by him, that to Jerusalem, where the great feast of the Jewish Passover was about to be celebrated, and where Jesus desired to appear and openly commence his teachings. The city was the great head-quarters of the priesthood and of Rabbinism, and it was necessary that the war

should be carried into the very heart of the enemy. Full of inspired thoughts, and a whole plane above the level of those he encountered, he felt on his arrival, a deep revulsion of feeling at seeing what represented the "church," the religious light of the nation, dedicated to external ceremonies and common traffic. Impatient and indignant with the materialism of those around him he sought to personally clear the outer court of the busy trade in offerings and sacrifices, and other confusions, by measures which were more courageous than prudent. It helped to make him known; it brought him out in the strong light which the guiding powers desired, for they knew his courage; and it also laid the foundation-stone of an opposition which never died. At the time no open attack was made on him; the colonnade around the court of the Gentiles formed a public resort, where the rabbies often taught, and where Jesus or others had a right to address the people; but he was asked by the Jews what authority he had to act in such a way. The same claim which Luther possessed when he publicly burnt the bull of Pope Leo the X., and nailed his reformatory theses on the doors of Wittenberg cathedral, — the claim of truth to be heard when error is leading astray. Jesus very quickly saw that he imperilled his life by actions such as these, and boldly seized on the heart of his mission in his reply. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; kill me, but I am the true temple; and I shall arise victorious over all that can be done against me." None understood the words until they had been smitten with the light which came from the cross. Like many other words of Christ they had a mystic meaning, and it is not difficult to picture the private opinions of his hearers about a statement they regarded as concerned with the temple at Jerusalem, and which they must have considered to be of the wildest character. The observation was remembered and repeated, after the crucifixion, in a truer sense, but with very different feelings, by both enemies and friends. Certain

it is that nothing could have been more distasteful to the conservative Jewish priest, steeped in a thousand years of tradition, than any declaration likely to be held derogatory to the temple which his order believed held the very Shekinah, the "consecrated Host," within. Moreover, Jerusalem was a city of priests and Levites, maintained by the temple tax, and the whole occupation and the very living of these men depended on the preservation of the system. "The offence must needs come." The power that was traversing their well-worn path was one which regarded not earthly churches nor the sacred observances of men; it was designed to rend asunder the old veil of the sanctuary, and display the Shekinah in man. The saintly Simeon, the devout Hillel, far removed as they were from the spirit of the common Pharisee, were not strong enough to follow in footsteps like these. Against him, Pharisee and Sadducee would unite and forget their differences. He was their common danger.

From this time the "Galilean prophet," as he was generally described, became a widely-known man, and, notwithstanding the feeling to which I have referred, he succeeded in deeply impressing, at this period, a very varied set of persons, including Jews and Romans. Among the Pharisees were some devout and patriotic men, who included scribes and rabbies; they were, however, zealous for the outward observance of the law, and, in a large number of cases, had carried it to an absurd extreme. The scribe who acknowledged that to love God and one's neighbour was the true law, and that sacrifices were worthless, and to whom Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," was an exception. One of these was Nicodemus, who, like many others in our own day, was willing to investigate truth in private, and so long as it should cost him nothing. The reputation of an hour is preferred, by most human beings, to the welfare and enlightenment of thousands. Nicodemus addressed Jesus very respectfully, in order to initiate a pleasant

and confidential conversation with him ; but the one he addressed, who read the thoughts of those around him with an extraordinary rapidity, at once told him there was no easy method of attaining to that spiritual kingdom, on which he so often dwelt. A man must be spiritually born before he could enter it. Jesus spoke of two great truths ; one that through self-sacrifice, or love, a man might win that soul-strength or union with his immortal *ego* which is delivered from the material and gravitates to the spiritual life by a natural law ; the other, that man, spiritually born, is always attracted to the spiritual and naturally belongs to the eternal kingdom of spirit. Both are pathways ; but the pathway to the higher immortality, which knows not death, is through the regeneration of spiritual birth in the marriage of soul.¹

Nicodemus professed not to understand it, although within writings revered by his nation were words which spoke in part of these things to the initiated. "Art thou a teacher of Israel, and understandest not?" said Christ. "If you cannot understand the laws of your own nature, how can you understand the laws of another and higher world?" Both are linked together : to realise aught of the world of spirit one must understand, in its entirety, planetary life. He observed, further, that only one person, so far, had attained to the power of being victorious over death, — one incarnated for the purpose "from heaven," or the unseen world, who was "in heaven" in the spirit, because he was not of earth. "And this one," said he, fully inspired with the knowledge of his great mission, "must be *lifted up* (publicly crucified), that whoever believes, may in him have eternal life." How many have believed? How many have known? That "eternal life" is the end and object of the millions of years of slow development of our orb. It is the ALL ; for that life includes love, purity, strength, righteousness, perfection. And

¹The new birth of the ancient mysteries were prophetic of this highest human condition.

the Divine Soul breathed into every world must bring forth the flower of Love, which is its Christ.

Nicodemus was not willing to pay the price; he was not ready to "do the truth," and "come to the light," and, like his fellows, he preferred the dim twilight to the searching blaze of a sun which penetrated into every crevice, and showed the dust, and rubbish, and waste places of the old habitations. He passed away from the crisis of his life, returned to the accustomed crowd, and we hear of him no more. *Where art thou, Nicodemus?*

Since the commencement of his work had been connected with John the Baptist, Jesus for a short time carried it on in a somewhat similar way, by addressing and baptising the people. He attracted more attention than John himself, in consequence of which the latter was questioned by some who had composed his audiences as to the work of the new prophet. With a nobility of character which showed an utter absence of every feeling of jealousy or selfishness, a rare trait in any person who has, as it were, prepared the way for another, John said that he himself was "not the Christ," but that he had been sent forth to create conditions which should make his career possible. "I have baptised with water; he will baptise with the spirit. My work has been connected with external reform; his with the interior one. My joy is complete," said this noble-hearted man. "It is what I have most desired. He must increase, and I must decrease." He added that he was incarnated from the spiritual world, had been sent by God, and that all things were given into his hand, so great would be the result of his work, — even "eternal life," — and in the light of the spirit we understand these apparently exaggerated and mysterious words, and know that they are true.

Like so many other of the strong souls of this world John was destined for martyrdom. His work was over, and the courage of his nature had drawn upon him the fatal displeasure of Herod Antipas. Notwithstanding

that he had been a popular preacher among the people in the country villages, who were removed from those influences which prevailed in the stronghold of the Jewish faith, the city of Jerusalem, the arm of tyranny was able to seize upon the hapless prophet, and his fearless voice was hushed for evermore. He was cast into a prison. For him there was no more sunshine left on earth. The gloomy windows of the castle where he thought and sighed looked out on the silent desert and the Dead Sea.

CHAPTER IV.

WORDS AND DEEDS OF POWER, AND FIRST PERSECUTIONS.

THE effect of the mournful event just mentioned upon Jesus was to bring out his faithfulness and firmness all the more, although he was impressed for a short time to return to Galilee.

With his separation from John he relinquished even the ceremony of baptism, the only rite he regarded with a passing favour. He had left behind the prophet of "the wilderness." His reputation was rapidly increasing, and with it his ability to disseminate the truths he realised, and he was employed more or less in public or private teaching and humanitarian actions, illustrative of it, every day. On his way northwards he passed through Samaria, the religious rival of the holy city since the reign of Nehemiah; and, wearied with the noonday walk, sat down to rest by the village well. Here it was that he uttered those remarkable words which have been so often repeated, and so little understood or practically carried out. A woman came from the town to draw water, and of her he asked some of it to drink. She was surprised at such a request from a man whom she recognised as a Jew, and this at once drew from Jesus some of those powerful and radical declarations which are the light of all time, and which breathed, and breathe still, the very spirit of liberty. He told her that he had no sympathy with such ideas, and that if she desired it he could give her, in return for her water from the well, the living water of truth. Truly did he say to this poor village woman, who would have been doubly despised by a Jew, both as a Samaritan and an example of promiscuous living, "Every one

who drinks of this water shall thirst again ; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but that water will become in him a well springing up unto *eternal life*." The woman, who appeared to have been simple in mind, and ready to learn, at once asked him for some. *What* was this water? The lower self ruled by the higher ; the physical by the immortal ; the body by the soul ! The inner vision of Jesus saw her condition, and, notwithstanding her attempt at concealment, he reminded her that she lived in promiscuous relations with men, — the desecration of true womanhood, and the imprisonment of the power of the woman-soul. Astonished at his clear sights he at once thought he must be a prophet, and immediately commenced to consult him on a vexed question of long standing, viz., as to whether men should worship at Jerusalem, or at Mount Gerizim, sacred to the memory of Abraham and overshadowing their town. The Samaritans had long been at feud with the Jews, both on religious and political grounds. Not only had they "no dealings with Jews," but, on the occasions when they met, encountered and returned deeds of violence. Then the flame of inspiration came forth from the free heart of Jesus, and, addressing her with the strongest emphasis, he said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. The true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ! God is a Spirit ; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth !"

Where and when have these words been acted upon? Where and when has this great prophecy been fulfilled? What has the materialism of man answered to this voice of the spirit? Has he not made God in his own image, an anthropomorphic being, to be knelt before and feared? Has he not declared that the sole salvation has been in the church of Rome, or of Luther, and listened to "the fathers" rather than to the intuitions of a free conscience, and of just perceptions? The real

temple is man himself; in that alone can the Central Soul be honored and revealed; and when that temple of immortal life and purity is reared, then man is nearest to the Divine, and the Divine dwells in its glory within him. Churches belong to the past; they are external and material; the race of the future, in harmony with the higher laws, will be living prayers because the spirit of love will dwell in them, even as it did in the one who thus spake.

Influenced by the power around him the woman began to recall the well-known prophecy of the coming Christ, who was to give the people light upon all things, but she could not rise into the full belief that he could possibly be the quiet, clear-eyed man before her. Could *he* be the Messiah? Jesus simply observed that he was; and, bewildered by his insight into her actions, and his unusual words and ways, the woman left her pitcher, and went into the town to tell her friends that she had had a wonderful experience, and had "met a man who had told her all the things that she had ever done." "Could this be the Christ?"

The companions of Jesus, who had yet to learn many things with regard to the character and necessities of his work, came back with food, and were doubtful about this familiar conversation with the Samaritan woman. This was a woman, too, which the world would still call, of immoral character. What would a strict Jew say of such a proceeding, — one of those who held oriental ideas about the seclusion and veiling of woman, — and was not this the way to lose influence as a reformer at the very beginning? In the eyes of men, yes. In the eyes of angels, no. A man so spiritual as Jesus, was completely lifted above a sphere which would have influenced and drawn aside other men. With her life and her tendencies, he had not the faintest sympathy; to him she was like a child wandering about and plucking apples which would inevitably set her teeth on edge. It was impossible for him to feel any indignation with her or any such person,

and he saw too much and too powerfully into the lives of the majority of the human beings whom he met, to consider that she differed in any way from the apparently moral Pharisees. He acted out the principle of an equality of morals between man and woman. If it is wrong for woman to sin, it is wrong also for man; and if it is a crime for woman to be in a scene which is degrading to the spirit, it is a crime for man to be there also. A pure woman will disarm physically-natured men; a pure man will disarm those impure magnetic wiles of woman which have been too often and too long the secret of her power and of her shame. Jesus was born on a plane where spirit speaks to spirit; in man and in woman he seized on this inner life, and, when it was not closed against him in ignorant blindness, he pierced it by his earnest and pure presence and his words of majesty. Unharmful and victorious was he whether with a Mary or a Magdalen, a woman of Samaria or a methodical Martha of Bethany. Nothing could have moved him but the noblest of soul-attractions, and these came not. When man and when woman recoil from union for any lower motive, then they wear an unseen armour everywhere, and belong to the divine order.

Uplifted by his inspirations, and drawing vital strength from angel-presences, Jesus replied to the invitation to eat by saying he had "meat to eat that they knew not of." The spiritual man, the man of the future, will require little or none of the coarse elements of food, the obtaining of which costs him now so much labour, and which have so unceasingly to be replenished. This belongs entirely to the physical; and in the air, and among strongly vitalised persons, and in the essences of common things, are forces which can sustain us if we only know how to use them. True life knows the secret of life everywhere, and responds to it, in fact, as one musical chord does to another. More than this, he rejoiced that he was actively engaged in the beautiful mission which absorbed his whole mind; to him it was, indeed,

“meat and drink.” The harvest was indeed “white;” and even in sectarian Samaria many gladly recognised Jesus as a “saviour-man.”

The healing power around Christ was remarkably and fully developed. That this is a latent force in the human race is demonstrated by a thousand facts, and the public exercise of it in his case showed that his magnetism must have been of the highest and most spiritual order. Sometimes he effected cures by mere will-power, sometimes by personal contact with the person afflicted. As the archetype of man, and the prophet of the highest human development, he was the conqueror not only of the power of death in his own person, but of disease in others. Of himself, it may be observed, that notwithstanding the incessant strain upon him in encountering public comment and criticism, and living a life of absolute freedom of thought and action which was in entire contrast to the customary usages, he never had an hour's sickness, and was invulnerable as regards infection. Sometimes he was wearied; sometimes he retired from the people to gather fresh strength from the unseen guardians around him; sometimes he had to rest with those whom he had chosen; but this was all.

These “miracles” of divines were merely the manifestations of a natural law in its full force, and the recovery of the youth at Capernaum, at the exact time Jesus foretold it to the anxious father, was no coincidence, but a simple exercise of the power of healing at a distance, which was made possible by the faith of the father as a connecting link. Since the interior vision of Jesus was open he knew that it had taken place. A pure and healthy magnetism will accomplish infinitely more than drugs, and indeed effect what drugs cannot do at all. The empiricism of the schools of medicine will vanish before a more enlightened science of man, and the physicians of the future, so long as disease demands their existence, will understand the forces of nature.

The case of the man suffering from paralysis was entirely similar, and he was purposely cured on the Jewish Sabbath as a mark of the great principle that man is of more consequence than churches, creeds, and observances of times and seasons, and that a "sabbath" may become a veritable superstition rather than a day of rest. Of course, the ancient Jews, like their modern representatives, considered a "desecration of the sabbath," even by humanitarian work, as a great sin. Human ideas of sin are always the reverse of the truth. The poor prostitute may walk the streets on Sunday as well as any other day, and, as long as the man who accosts her round some remote street corner attends his "place of worship," all are silent. Let a library or an art-gallery be opened, that the minds of wearied men, shut up in murky factories and stores may be stimulated and refreshed, and the Pharisees gather together in an indignation meeting. Moreover, this act of Jesus was worse than Europeans have any conception of. The observance of the Jewish Sabbath was one of the most strictly-held rites of the ancient Jew; it was sacred to him from associations he regarded as holy; even its absurdities of a later day had their significance, and such a deed as that of healing can only be paralleled by the case of a visit to the opera on the Sunday of our own period. The spirit of persecution was at once evoked, and the latent elements of disapprobation, to which reference has already been made, became very perceptible. Already many of the strict Jews desired to get rid of Jesus, and the simple remark that he made, that "his Father worked in him," which was indeed absolutely true, was readily perverted into an assertion of his equality with the Soul of the universe, and a justification for his murder. Centuries later the very same error was made the ground for his deification.

In speaking of "his Father," Jesus sometimes referred to his immortal parentage, to which he once alluded in observing that "Christ" was not the literal "Son of David," realising that there was with him an

angel-being who appeared to him as his father, who sustained him with a devoted and sacred affection, and once or twice spoke to him in an audible voice; and sometimes to the Divine Father, whom he was inspired to reveal as the Spirit of Eternal Love, whose son he was in another and wider sense. Whichever might have been his meaning, his words were both beautiful and true; and when he again speaks to mortal ears, and becomes visible to mortal eyes, as will be the case when this earth is pure enough to receive his presence, he will himself make clear every incident of the life which has forever marked the course of human destiny. For the present purpose all has been said that it is wise to disclose.

The discourse which Jesus gave in explanation of his mission was little likely to calm the growing feeling. He spoke almost in vain of the "eternal life;" of how to avoid "the judgment;" that failure to attain the necessary development; how "the dead" should live if they would but listen to him, and how he represented immortality in his own person; how, also, the spirits of the departed should enter on eternal life if they had lived in accordance with conditions in harmony with it; how an inevitable term of "judgment" or suffering awaited evil-doers; how the prophets and John had pointed him out as the coming Messenger, and the very scriptures spoke of his mission; and how he was but doing the Father's will, and sought nothing from men who rejected him because they understood him not, desiring to be popular among their fellows, and indifferent to the "glory" which comes from the "only God." He told them, no less in vain, if they really believed Moses they would recognise him, and that even Moses they failed to understand in the light of a reformer of the people."

It was necessary to speak the truth, — it always is; it is the reformer's glory, no matter what follows. But the inspired Man, longing to enlighten his audience, penetrated with a profound realisation of the truth of

his sacred work for liberty, was only forging the nails which were to hold him to the cross.

There were unseen powers, attached to the past, spirits of the earth-sphere, blind and in darkness,—spirits of such men as those to whom he vainly appealed; and they regarded him with fear and anger, and gathered around many a one in these crowds. The spirit of the pious Torquemada cannot endure the freedom which radiates around the Christ-spirit of truth. It will slay, and torture, and persecute, to maintain its “true church.”

Undaunted by this second experience at Jerusalem, whither he was strongly attracted from the fact that it was the centre of the national life and culture, Jesus returned to Nazareth, and sought, amid the familiar surroundings of his native town, to awaken thought among those who were most acquainted with his home and his life. The synagogues were open on week-days as well as the sabbaths, and were available for addresses and comments on the scriptures to the people, by any adult. A portion of the law and also of the prophets was read; but the services were long and tedious, and consisted, like those of the modern Sunday, of many “vain repetitions.” Entering the one at Nazareth, and opening the pages of the book of the ancient prophet Isaiah, which came home to him as they did to no other, he read the words:—

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
“Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor;
“He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
“And recovering of sight to the blind;
“To set at liberty them that are bruised,
“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
“To comfort all that mourn.”¹

¹ Isaiah, lxi.

“Good tidings,” “release to captives,” “freedom for the crushed.” Who was fulfilling such a prophecy if he was not? Ought he not to reveal what all this, so often repeated and interpreted at hap-hazard, really pointed out? And he spoke with boldness: “To-day has this scripture been fulfilled in your ears!” During the first moments of his address he excited interest and wonder, until the audience recalled that he was “the carpenter’s son.” Trade in various branches was held in honour at that time in Palestine, and that of a carpenter was looked upon with favour, therefore it must not be considered as parallel to the position of a joiner in our own days of prejudice and pride of caste. Still he was familiarly known, and it was presumption. Instantly recognising the feeling, Jesus told them that “no prophet was accepted in his own country,” and that even Elijah, whom they so greatly honoured, had left “many widows in Israel,” and had been sent to one only in Sidon, just as many lepers had been passed over by Elisha, while a *Syrian* had been healed. These observations, evidently referring to his recent encounter with opposition at Jerusalem, and pointing to the fact that the mission of the Messiah, which he claimed to fulfil, would be world-wide, immediately excited the extreme indignation of the congregation, who were imbued with the narrow religious patriotism of their race. For the first time he felt the force and fury of active persecution; he was speedily mobbed, and turned out of the town, and but for his power of rapidly disappearing from the crowd, in which he was aided by spiritual agency, he would have been thrown over the cliff at the brow of the hill, and at once killed. Such are the results of truth-speaking, especially in those cases in which the truth holds up the old and familiar, and long revered, the “sacred word,” in a new and startling light. It appears to be what men call “blasphemy,”—a sin, it may be observed, of their own creation,—while in reality it is the ray of heavenly sunshine thrown into a long-closed place.

CHAPTER V.

PLAIN TEACHINGS AND FREE ACTIONS.

REJECTED at Jerusalem, and persecuted at Nazareth, Jesus carried on his work among the towns of Galilee, never for a moment doubting the heaven-sent nature of his message, never for a moment faltering in duty. When the soul of man is once on fire with an immortal truth, the troubled waters of human criticism are powerless to quench it, surge as they may. Well is it for the world that this is necessarily so, or long ago the light of truth, and with it progress, would have perished everywhere.

The next "miracle," so called by divines, was a simple act of prophetic clairvoyance, or clear vision. Compelled, in the course of addressing a large crowd of persons, who now gathered around him from the most varied motives, to be removed from their material influences, which at times almost overpowered his highly spiritualised organisation, he had entered a boat belonging to his companion Peter, and at the conclusion of his discourse, bade him lower his nets. Peter was incredulous, having been unsuccessful for many hours, but Jesus foresaw that the fish would be caught. It was his spiritual insight, no supernatural intervention, which is the point of the record. The shoal had come; none knew of it except Jesus, and he stated the fact because he had a gift they did not possess. In so doing, he simply illustrated a by no means uncommon natural gift. Miracles, in truth, which are supposed alterations or suspensions of fixed laws, are impossibilities. Jesus never attempted to make an animal read or write; to do this would answer to the popular idea of a miracle, since it would be the reversal of an organic law. The dis-

inction is one which can only be understood by those who have studied the marked difference between spiritual gifts and powers, and the popular idea of miracles. The one case is possible, true, grand, and progressive in character; the other idea absurd and chaotic, leading nowhere.

That Jesus regarded his power as sacred, and consecrated it to benevolent and humanitarian ends, is shown by his refusal to visit Herod, of whose reputation he had heard, in the character of a thaumaturgist. Between the true Rosicrucian and the sorcerer,¹ — nature's complete man, and the magician of unconsecrated art, — there is a world-wide gulf. Sorcery is a crime of the soul, and leads to chains; the capacity to heal, to truly see, to know, to will, is its royal power, and leads to liberty. The pathway is lit by wisdom and by love, and self knows them not.

At Capernaum, Jesus again spoke in the synagogue, although it was far from congenial to him. He had begun to realise that his victory would be outside of it, and unrecognised by the very church which revered the prophecies concerning him. He was fulfilling them too spiritually to be either welcomed or credited, and when men are fully surrendered to their own literal interpretations of chapter and text, they are deaf to the angel-voice. To "come up hither" is more than they can accomplish; they are on their knees, with their faces towards the old Mecca; they desire a great nation, a man of war at its head; a palace and a king. Ye tiaras and

¹ The true adept was a man who had conquered self, and lived for truth and humanity, and to whom nature had revealed her inner soul in response to consecrated art, the spirit of love, and the aspiration for the divine. The sorcerer, on the other hand, was one who obtained a certain measure of occult power by evil methods, for evil purposes, and for selfish ends. Animals were tortured, and in ancient Rome the abandoned infants who were exposed by their parents (to whom Paul alluded in his letter) were seized on by sorcerers in order that their bodies should be used in incantations. It is needless to say that the latter can never attain to the sublime power of the true initiate, and that the difference between the godlike science of the soul, and the limited power of the mere magician, is the difference between heaven and hell. Those clerical teachers who confuse the common gift of seership with "witchcraft" should learn what necromancy, or "divination" through animal and human victims really was.

crowns, ye robes of church and state, ye feathers and trinkets of the hour, when will ye cease? The inner life is the only kingdom, and the man or woman "made perfect through suffering" is the only king or queen.

The casting out of the evil spirit in the man who disturbed the assembled congregation was an illustration of a gift of Jesus, which we might well pray to God were more common! Obsession, or the control of the physical organism of a human being by a foreign and evil-disposed spirit, is a fact, as much so in our own day as in the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Half the asylums — those living hells of melancholy and degraded psychological influences — might be emptied, if their inmates were less closely herded together, and were also individually treated by pure and healthy healing magnetism. The semi-science of the present does not recognise the true nature of man; how can it meet cases it does not understand? The action of the overtaxed or diseased brain, or depleted nervous system, essentially differs from that of a foreign influence; the former *may* be cured, the latter *can* be. Jesus only did what the true physician, who should be a seer as well as a scientist, ought to do at the present hour.

It is likewise no less important to distinguish extraordinary spiritual influence from the hallucinations of insanity. Some observations will be offered upon this point in the course of these interpretations of the life of Jesus.

The healing of the leper¹ was an extreme instance of the concentrated potency of the gift which Jesus possessed. In this case, as in all other cases, he at once set aside all the Jewish prejudices with regard to ceremonial pollution, extended his hand, the instrument of a mighty force, towards the unfortunate sufferer, and exerted his will that the elements of health should de-

¹ The lepers, the afflicted outcasts of their race, had dwelt for ages in the rock-tombs of the valley in which were kindled those purifying fires which furnished Jesus with the illustration of the condition of Gehenna, mistranslated *hell*. The hell of Calvin, which has so largely influenced popular preachers, was the creation of his own ignorance.

stroy those of disease. It was accomplished. The letter of the ecclesiastical law was violated; the spirit was fulfilled. Leprosy is commonly considered incurable, but even this, when not in its last stages, may yield to the force of a higher law; for, if tumours and cancers, some of the foulest diseases which eat into the tender flesh of human beings, can be dissolved by the strong magnetism and pure will of a healthy and noble-hearted man, in our own time, even such a condition as that of the leper might, and did, in some instances, yield to the beautiful strength of him who was and is the Christ. He enjoined silence on the subject of the cure, to avoid the sudden sensation which would arise among the people of the towns, but the request was not respected; and, in consequence of the curiosity and disposition to crowd after him on their part, a state of things which greatly tended to exhaust him to little purpose, he had to retire into almost uninhabited parts of the province. His advice to the man healed, that he should show himself to the priest, was not given out of any sympathy with legal ceremonies, but merely to show that the scrupulous observances to avoid pollution had been carried out in the most exalted manner. It was a "testimony," indeed. If personal purity had been an object in the past, who had realised that object so well as he?

His prayers for strength were answered, and his reputation rapidly increased. He began to be quietly watched by the Pharisees and lawyers who came from many places, and even from Jerusalem, and were by no means gratified at perceiving the influence he was acquiring. The restoration of the man suffering from paralysis excited their indignation, owing to the words with which the deed was accompanied. "Thy *sins* are forgiven thee," said Jesus, with love and pity in his heart for one whose wasted life had been the cause of his shipwreck. The consequences of certain classes of sin are diseases of a very varied character. To remove those consequences was a forgiveness, or abrogation of those evil-doings which was of far more importance

than any spoken formalities. It was an absolution such as no priest could utter, but only a man of power, and it was typical of the work of the saviour-life, through which sins and their results must eventually pass away. Happy was the one who was delivered for the sake of a noble truth; others have to learn by slow degrees the laws which elevate and vitalise, or "grind to powder."

Moreover, his disregard of the sabbath was followed by an equal indifference to the interminable ceremonial ablutions practised by the Jews, to whom it became a fresh cause of offence. "Why did he act in this way?" Jesus replied that they were the real transgressors, and quoted the words of their revered prophet against them: "They honoured God with their lips; their hearts were far from him." And to the people he turned and declared that food eaten with unwashed hands had no defiling power; but the condition of the inner life, whence arose evil thoughts and desires.

"The Pharisees are deeply offended by your teachings," said his alarmed friends. "Let them alone," replied Jesus, "they are blind guides. Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

He maintained his right to perfect freedom in such matters, and declined to sacrifice his firmly-held principles arising from clear insight, even to please those Pharisees who at first received him at their own tables. "How foolish it is!" he exclaimed. "What is the use of cleansing vessels when your inner lives are full of evil desires. Be pure *within*, and all external things are clean unto you." This was the real fulfilment of the old law, and he truly told the people that, "if their righteousness exceeded not the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Yet, the opposition to the work of Jesus had not yet assumed any marked form; it was not permitted to do so, and he was appealed to by all classes of persons for

aid, especially by those who were groaning under the weight of sickness or bereavements. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and religious prejudices will often disappear for the moment in view of help and comfort even when they may be given from a distrusted source. Moreover, a wave of spiritual power passed over the people, and whether self-interest or curiosity led them to Jesus or not, it is certain that he was unceasingly thronged, and at times to an inconvenient extent. He cured Gentiles as well as Jews. The servant of the Roman centurion, who was so popular with the Jews, owing to his liberality of mind, was healed at a distance, the extreme faith of the Roman, and his presence, forming the necessary medium, or connection. Jesus was struck with the intense and sympathetic faith of the man, so contrary to the attitude of scepticism and the critical comments he often met with, and indeed *felt*, when they were unspoken, in the minds of those around him, and he observed that Gentiles had the same capacity to enter into "the kingdom" as Jews, and, indeed, that the Jews, who should have been its own sons, would retire into darkness and sorrow. It was one of his radical speeches, sure to be remembered; sure to raise hostility against him; but it was true, and history has fulfilled the prophecy.

It was now necessary that his personal friends, or followers, should be increased in number, to aid him in sustaining the strain of public work, and Jesus was impressed to choose certain persons to join those who were already around him. Among them was Levi, or Matthew, to whom he uttered those words of meaning, "*Follow me!*" He belonged to a class of men whom the Jews held in contempt for their want of patriotism and their frequent extortions. He was a tax-farmer, a publican, but he possessed a spirit which was strong and teachable. At the entertainment he gave, Jesus and his friends sat down with what the Pharisees considered "sinners," those excommunicated

for their offences from the synagogue, as well as publicans, and they did not fail to add this action to the list of misdoings, which indeed were daily increasing. To associate with the outcasts of society, so called,—and, alas! are the righteous to be found within society's inner circle?—is to commit, in the eyes of the world, an unpardonable sin. One can imagine the feeling with which the words, "He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners," was spoken. Jesus, however, made a singularly witty reply. On hearing of this new criticism, he remarked that it was his business to call "not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Perhaps the quiet sarcasm was not understood; but if it were we may be sure it only increased the offence. Full of tragic and solemn events as was the life of Jesus, and weighed as he was with anxiety and care in the carrying forward of his great purpose, he was a man who had a profound sense of the absurd in human nature; he had to deal with persons who, compared with him, were in a condition of childhood, and sometimes he hardly knew whether to denounce or smile.

A deep distrust of him became general among the Pharisees. Among other things he was rebuked for not fasting, and endeavoured to teach his critics that "new wine must go into new skins," and that it was of no use to preach and act out a spiritual life, and live according to old rules. And he went on in his own way, speaking as he knew and believed, and never failing wherever he was to fearlessly *live out* his inspired convictions. How could he withhold bread from those outcast and forsaken ones who had strength enough and faith enough to appeal for "the crumbs which fell from the master's table?"

He gave another very strong practical protest against the religious Sabbatarianism of his country, which was something similar to that which reigned in Scotland, and among the Puritans of Cromwell's time, and which has left its influence on the present century, by walking

through the cornfields with his little band of personal friends, and gathering and eating some of the ears of corn. This occasioned great scandal, and those who justify particular regulations, not for their own sake, but "the *principles* they involve," that arch-argument in behalf of ancient institutions, must inevitably take issue against them. They were violating a deep-rooted popular prejudice. Jesus tried to illuminate the minds of the Pharisees by giving an illustration from their own history, and then, leaving the past, he boldly said that the soul was greater than the temple; that they did not understand that love was the only worship,¹ and that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." It was a day of rest for man; good in its right aspect, and essential for health of body and mind, but not designed to enslave or to chain any person to fixed rules of action or occupation. How many of us have learned this in Christian countries? When shall we learn it? When will the people be taught that they have souls six days in the week as well as on the seventh? and that the soul of man needs not only prayer and aspiration, at all times and everywhere, but may well ask for time to learn, and enjoy, and rest as it will, on the seventh? The man of toil needs something besides a church on the day called Sunday.

Jesus concluded his sabbath by restoring to a man the use of his withered hand, and within the very shadow of the synagogue, nor could his opponents reply to his plain question as to whether it was lawful "to do good or harm" on that particular day? They could not answer him, but they were not convinced. The mental slave never is; for he dares not think for himself. All he can do, even when he beholds a good deed, something like that of Jesus at Bethesda, is to say, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful to carry thy

¹ "If you had known what this meaneth, — I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, — you would not have condemned the guiltless." — Matt. xii., 7; also ix. 13.

bed." To him, indeed, good is evil, and evil good. And the consequence was that these incensed sabbatarians, devoted to the past, and blind to all human interests, secretly counselled together as to the expediency of getting rid of Jesus altogether, and of forever stilling the voice which was so often uplifted in the cause of freedom.

The result of all this was that Jesus, who was at issue with the Jewish authorities on the two great questions of their sabbath and ceremonial ablutions, found himself the one great centre of opposition, comment, curiosity, eager interest, and wonder, wherever he went. He stood, also, between two powerful spiritual forces, arrayed then, as at this period, in a mighty battle for life or death: the influences concerned with the systems of the past, the million spirits, creed-bound and earth-bound, devoted to the church, and the higher influences from a heavenly sphere, at work for the kingdom of God on earth, and the liberation and perfection of the human race. They were, and are, "powers of darkness," and of light. He well knew them, and felt the true nature of the conflict. The Jewish scribes openly declared he was "possessed of the devil," whoever and whatever that fiction of priests might be; and that he restored the sick, and relieved the obsessed by his power. Jesus replied to them according to their folly, and asked whether "Satan" would be likely to "cast out Satan." "If so, he must come to an end," and the case would be that of a kingdom divided against itself. Then he earnestly warned the people against the consequences of mental slavery. Those who seek to eclipse light for the world, heaven-sent, and heaven-appointed, mislead themselves and others, and sin against the divine breath of the Spirit in the soul. It is a wrong, which, however over-ruled by angel-power, has, indeed, an eternal condemnation. It is a sin which cannot be "forgiven," or hidden; for the ages proclaim the wrongs committed against truth. However fully they

who arose against him may have risen from the old feelings now, who can but condemn forever the accusations and the cruelties by which Israel's holiest seer was once oppressed?

He had also to deal with a common difficulty in the case of his own family. His mother, who had heard the most various reports, and whose heart was filled with anxiety and dread with regard to his strange career, at last went to search for him herself, accompanied by his brothers, for the foster-father, Joseph, whose authority would have been appealed to, had been removed from the sphere of earth. He had created little short of an uproar, and his own friends were doubtful as to his sanity. Insanity is the easiest way of accounting for the inspirations and the conduct of men marked for special work, and in all ages it has been the common cry. Human ignorance has written the word upon the most consecrated of names, — that of Paul, the early Christians, Joan of Arc, George Stephenson, Darwin. His friends wanted to calm this dangerous excitement among the people, and to reason with, and endeavour to moderate the actions of Jesus. Fortunately, materialistic "insane physicians," who are a source of danger to the welfare of the world, and of invitation to the commission of crime beyond the reach of legal retribution, and which any motive might actuate, did not exist at that date in Palestine. If they had existed they would have enunciated their superior wisdom in no measured terms, and signed certificates for the friends of Jesus. It is not difficult to realise how deeply this last doubt must have hurt the feelings of a man who was as sensitive as he was strong. He must, indeed, have been ready to cry that he was alone and without any relations; and at last he plainly said that those were nearest to him and most closely related to him who sought to do "the will of God!" He must have gone through some painful experiences at this time before he could have answered to the woman who told him his *mother*

was indeed blessed, "Those, rather, are blessed who receive truth and hold it fast." Poor, tired and suffering soul, bleeding at every stage of thy efforts for the divine work of liberty! How often wert thou weary! How often did the arrows pierce thee! How often didst thou feel the martyrdom of utter loneliness among thy fellows! How often did the tears gather in thy clear-seeing eyes! Yet a legion of angels was with thee, and they were showering blessings on thee for every pang of anguish, and for every tear!

CHAPTER VI.

SACRIFICES FOR TRUTH.

NEXT in order follow and may be considered those passages which state that Christ restored dead persons to life; or rather reunited the spirit to an absolutely, or an apparently, dead body.

The first instance is that of the widow's son at Nain. The body was being borne out of the gate of the town, and seemed to be entirely lifeless. But several points must be remembered in considering this record. First, that the body was that of a young person, whose vital forces had not been slowly exhausted by old age, but arrested in their action by some curable disease; secondly, that, although the spirit had left the form it was still in close connection with it; thirdly, that there is no evidence that the body had succumbed to the disintegration of corruption, which would resolve it into decaying matter, and into the *active* condition of death. Therefore, it was possible to reunite the spirit to the body under a powerful restorative and attractive influence; and this Jesus accomplished in the presence of the weeping mother. "Weep not!" said he. And the lifeless body became a living man once more. It was one of his strong blows against the "last enemy," typical of his crowning work, and prophetic of the time when there should, and shall be, no more such bitter tears.

The impression he made was everywhere deepening, and many mixed reports reaching the ears of the imprisoned John he sent a message of inquiry to Jesus by way of settling some anxious doubts which had occasionally crossed his mind during those mournful days of anguish and isolation. These experiences, trying as

they were to the Nazarene, were absolutely essential to the attainment of that interior strength which gave him victory. He had to learn to stand alone, and to look to God and the angels for the power which seemed to fail and grow dim even in the most developed and noble of human beings. It was not cheering to him to hear from the man who, of all others, seemed to have recognised and hailed his mission, the words, "Art thou he that cometh, or should we look for another?" Jesus gave a practical reply; he healed many sick persons; he restored sight to the blind in the presence of his questioners; and then he said, "Tell John what you have seen; the man who understands what I am doing, and realises that it is indeed *good*, is fortunate and blessed." Fortunate indeed, for he would have the inestimable blessing of a liberal spirit, full of faith in good deeds and good teachings, whether they were endorsed by a particular church or not.

And he pointed out that it was impossible in any way to satisfy minds pledged to the past, since John, who neither ate bread nor drank wine, was accused of being influenced by an evil spirit, while he, who joined the tables of those who invited him, was condemned as a "glutton and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners."

An incident occurred at this time which throws another ray of light on the beautiful attitude of Jesus towards woman. He had been the guest of a Pharisee called Simon, who, however, did not seem to have treated him with the usual oriental courtesies. Almost any stranger was permitted to enter an Eastern room, and among those who took advantage of this hospitable custom was one who, we may be sure, was a very unwelcome visitor,—a fallen woman,—a woman whom we should probably describe as "of the streets." Attracted at last by the sphere of purity and unselfish devotion around Jesus, which must indeed have been a novelty to her after her experiences of other men, she stood close to his seat, and touched in her inmost heart by his

unwonted and spiritual presence the tears began to roll down her cheeks. Hardly knowing how to express her emotion, she opened a costly box of perfumed ointment and anointed his feet, using her own luxuriant tresses of hair to wipe away the tears which fell upon them. An ordinary "good man" would have turned away, more careful of his own character than the feelings or dire necessities of any human being. Indeed, so sure was Simon that he did not recognise the kind of woman who was thus freely expressing her emotions, that he considered Jesus could not possess the clear vision of which he had heard so much. But Jesus never thought of his reputation; and he was the only man who had no need to think of it. He saw into the suffering soul before him and pitied it; into his own no thought of vice could enter. It was a clear fountain of free and exalted inspiration, into which instincts of self and sense could enter not. He felt the mental attitude of Simon, and gave him a proof not only of his clear insight, but of the nature of his mission. "Those who had sinned most," he said, "would love most when they were forgiven;" and he reminded him of the warmth with which this poor woman had welcomed him. What Simon felt on receiving this reproof we know not, but Christ truly said that the woman's "faith" — it would be better to say her capacity of appreciating good, — was and would become her salvation. He dismissed the Magadalen as he did other women of like disposition, with the kindest words, "Go in peace!" With the insight he possessed into the lives of persons around him we may be almost certain that Jesus saw those who were loud in their condemnation of fallen women were no better in a true moral condition themselves. Who leads woman astray first of all? Man. And why? Because his passions demand promiscuous and polygamous relations; and even at this date, in so-called civilised and Christian countries. Both sin, if sin there be in the conditions and organisations in which the physical and not the

spiritual is expressed; but the world marks woman only with the shame.

That the conduct of Christ towards such women, and indeed towards all women, was in deep contrast to the social customs of his time and race, and it may be added, even our own, is apparent, and marks him as the representative of a regenerating power. As he was, so was he able to act, and to rightly gauge the causes of good and evil. Far removed as his brief earth-life was from our own century, he was far beyond it, and belonged to the New Era.

The next instance of his great restorative gifts that should be noticed was the case of the obsessed man who lived among the tombs in a place in Perœa. From the peculiar result on the swine it seems apparent that this unfortunate person had become the prey of certain elemental, or sub-human spirits; and that this is possible under certain conditions, none will deny who know that such beings exist. One of the greatest afflictions of our planet in its present stage is that tens of thousands of earth-bound spirits are living on it out of the form, and eager to attach themselves to those who furnish the elements of attraction. Among these are elementary spirits, sometimes harmless, sometimes mischievous in character, who have never been incarnated in human form, and are without moral qualities, or any large amount of intelligence. The man was relieved, the elements which made his state possible destroyed, and their place supplied by pure magnetism, and Jesus was repaid by the owners of the herd requesting him to leave their neighbourhood. The sympathies of some human beings are contracted, and yet it may be doubted whether the loss of a flock of domestic animals would be very welcome in our own days, or be at all calculated to excite the popular gratitude.

All were not suited for close companionship with Jesus. He was compelled to refuse the earnest request of this restored and relieved victim of obsession, that he might become one of his followers. He was not

fitted to aid in such a work as that of Christ's, and was wisely bidden to return home in peace.

It was in the course of these varied journeys from place to place that Jesus addressed the people in so many of those parables or allegories which were alike characteristic of an oriental country, and suited to enlighten the simplest mind among his audiences. Among them were those of the sower, the mustard-seed, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and others. In each he sought to unfold the growth of truth, and the way in which it expanded in the congenial or uncongenial spiritual soils on which it fell, on the quiet development of the true kingdom, which was like a pearl, worth all earthly possessions, and so forth. It is needless to dwell on what is apparent to every reader of these writings. The establishment of this true "kingdom" was what he was ever seeking to point out to a people who were eagerly and unceasingly expecting a material kingdom and an earthly king, and it was an exceedingly difficult work. His own companions, who did know something of its mysteries, or inner meaning, and to whom he "privately expounded all things," often fell into very material conceptions; and the people at large, it may be truly asserted, never understood the truth contained in the parables in its highest sense at all.

The passage with regard to the angels and the "furnace of fire," may be reserved for a consideration of the nature of the spirit, the unseen life, and the real Gehenna, and we may pass to another illustration of the healing gift of Jesus in the case of the daughter of Jairus, an officer of one of the synagogues, whose extreme grief brought him as it were to the feet of this strange, much-criticised, yet wonderful prophet. As he was on his way to the child a woman who had suffered from a prolonged and trying disease, caught hold of his garment, and, with an intensity of belief and longing, drew from him vital strength which instantly awoke the consciousness of Jesus. Surrounded as he

was by the people, he instantly felt the peculiar sensation which follows the effort of healing, and the surprise of his companions that he inquired into the cause of it, proves that they did not yet realise a common law, which is more or less experienced by every person in their contact with others. The intense faith of the woman permitted her cure, and was indeed, as Christ declared, the cause of her being "made whole." "Go in peace!" were his beautiful and often-repeated words, and he passed on with Jairus, to remove the sorrow of other aching hearts. On their way a messenger came to say the child was dead; but Jesus knew his power, and went onwards. On seeing her he perceived that she was in a state of trance, induced by extreme weakness, and at once said, "She is not dead." "Only *believe*," said he; "keep away from me your doubts and your scepticism, and she shall be made whole." Jairus did believe, although his household did not, and calling back the spirit to the lifeless body, Jesus, after requesting the retirement of all but the father, took the little hand in his own, and the child recovered consciousness and arose. How many, after a severe illness, might have been rescued from premature interment through the use of interior vision, such as that possessed by Christ!

That scepticism and incredulous scorn of his gifts interfered with, and sometimes entirely prevented their manifestation, we know from the result of a visit to his native town, where, although the wave of persecution which had threatened his life had subsided, he was very unpopular. His fellow-townsmen acknowledged that he accomplished certain things, but the authority of the carpenter's son they considered could be but small, and he was beyond their serious consideration. In consequence, Jesus was unable to do more than aid a few sick persons, and was fain to observe, like many a reformer of later times, that the last persons to recognise a prophet are those of his own house and country. Faith, he explained, was a necessary mental condition for the ex-

ercise of the power of the will, whether it might be one's own or that of holy spirits. "If you have FAITH you may move mountains," he declared, and mountains of one kind or another have indeed been moved by the single force of a strong and true human being who believed in the victory of good.

"*If thou can'st!*" he exclaimed, repeating the words of the father who came to him with his obsessed son. "*All* things are possible to him who believes."

He had now more to do than it was possible for him to accomplish alone, and was compelled to send his companions to many places which he was unable to visit. They had developed a certain amount of spiritual power themselves, and were able to carry on very effectually the work of healing, as well as to teach some valuable lessons.

It was about this time that a deep shadow fell on the life of Jesus in the martyr-fate of John the Baptist. He was already in imminent danger himself, and, notwithstanding his humanitarian deeds and disposition, was looked upon by influential persons as a Sabbath-breaker and blasphemer of sacred writ; and in the death of John, the man who had opened the gateway of his mission for him, he must have felt a prophecy of his own coming end. A woman like Herodias, conscious of her power over men, and jealous of anything that crossed it, is treacherous by nature. Her very capacity to influence is an art, and it is never honestly or honourably exercised. She had never forgiven John for his attempt to interfere with her affection and her ambition, and the moment the temptation to revenge and rid herself of an annoyance came, she yielded to it. Thus fell the head of a noble man, sacrificed, as many a great life in this world has been, to the intrigues of a strong, passion-inspiring woman, and a weak, passion-inspired man. It was the first martyrdom connected with the mission of Christ, to be followed by many, many others. Jesus received the mournful news with profound sadness, and withdrew for a time to a remote place, where, however,

he still went on with his work of teaching those whom he saw were, indeed, "sheep without a shepherd."

It was on one of these occasions that the hunger of his audience was relieved by a multiplication of the material substance of some bread, and in sufficient quantity to completely satisfy them. This exercise of will over matter must have been very quietly accomplished among his own companions, who had returned to him, and was probably not actually witnessed by any but themselves. Of this event it can only be said that it was not only possible, but will be illustrated as we hardly dare to dream, in the race of the future, and that Christ was a prophecy of a spiritual type of humanity, has already been asserted as the supreme truth of his incarnation. The desire of the people to make him a king shows us what the result would have been had he yielded to the early temptation to use his gifts for personal ends alone, and refrained from speaking and acting in the eternal interests of truth. "The kingdoms of the earth" might, indeed, have been his in one sense; the Jewish authorities would have been pleased rather than offended, and gratified at the great reputation of one of their own nation, and the "kingdom of heaven" would have been sacrificed. Indifferent to the foolish voice of a multitude which was for him to-day, and would be against him to-morrow, Jesus retired to breathe the silent, restful, vital air of a mountain, where he could regain strength, commune with unseen presences, and throw off the corrupt and stifling influences of earth.

It was just after this that his companions, who were in a boat on the lake, saw him walking on the water. Only a spirit, or a spiritual man, could do this, and it was as easy for Christ to walk on the sea as it is for certain persons to project by will the astral body, and appear to friends in harmony with them. In his case the body was a mere palpable manifestation of the spirit, so ethereal that it simply served to make him visible and objective to the blind senses of his fellow-men, and, in accordance with spiritual laws, he could walk on water

as we do on land. The sudden storms to which the lake was liable could be subdued by the power of will, or Jesus could have foreseen the approaching calm. That his appearance must have been intensely spiritual at the time is shown from the startled conjecture of his friends, and his own words, "It is I; be not afraid!"

In the course of his next address to the people, he earnestly appealed to them not to seek him for "signs" and apparent "wonders," or for food, but to work for the eternal life which he endeavoured to reveal to them. That was the "bread of heaven." Moses had not given it; "it was the bread of God which gave life to the world." Then he said truly: "I am the bread of life! He who cometh to me shall not hunger, and he who believeth on me shall never thirst." Alas! who have had the understanding or the faith to follow the weary footsteps of a martyr life,—to sacrifice all for a cause? Who had then? They saw him, but "believed not." Nevertheless, he added, no less truly, that he should "lose none;" all would eventually possess this life, for it was the Father's will.

These truths, as wholly misunderstood by the Jews of the past as they are by the churches of the present, excited their criticism and anger. They did not know that Jesus was incarnated from above for his work, and his statement that he had "come from heaven" was received with impatience. "How could he give his flesh for the life of the world?"

Even his own friends thought such observations extravagant, and it was almost in vain that he tried to teach them they had to be accepted in a spiritual sense. Why should he not be victor over death? "It is the *spirit* that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." Some of them to whom this deep interior life, and all it included, was altogether incomprehensible, left him, and from this time Judas experienced silent doubts.

None could understand Jesus and all he represented,

unless his own spiritual insight was opened, and unless it was given him of the Father, and how few were ready to receive such all-embracing ideas! His special followers remained firm, but there is no question their faith in him was occasionally tried, although Peter enthusiastically acknowledged, when he asked if they also were about to desert him, that he "had the words of eternal life." Reference will be made to these words in the course of some remarks on immortality. And the faith of Jesus was tried likewise. He sadly replied to Peter: "Even among you, whom I have chosen, one has succumbed to evil influences!"

It was with bleeding feet and an aching heart that the man of Nazareth pressed on. Opposition, and even dislike, assailed him with their murderous arrows on every side. His life was in danger, and in the interests of his work he had to protect it until "his hour was come," and, in consequence of all this, fresh criticism awaited him, even from his own brothers. They "did not believe in him," and they were already worn out and impatient with the ceaseless tumult which surged around him. Jesus sadly remarked to them "My time is not yet come!" "The world cannot hate you," he said, "for you are in harmony with it; it hates me, because I utter truths which its evil ways and errors demand." And he adhered to his wise decision to travel secretly to Jerusalem. Known as he now was, together with some of his relations, who were quickly recognised, he was at once inquired for, and the attitude of the public mind towards him at this stage of his career may be clearly recognised in the two general comments; some said, "He is a good man;" others said "Not so, for he is leading the multitude astray." We may be sure that the latter class was of those most attached to the church. "Religious persons" always fear reformers and truth-speakers, and oppose them as teaching "very unsettling and dangerous ideas." Christ, of course, was "very unsound."

In the midst of all this, and at the height of the feast,

he was suddenly impelled to come forth and renew his addresses. He plainly stated that he was inspired; that he sought not his own reputation; and he reminded them with but too much force of argument that, although they professed to revere Moses so greatly, they did not keep his laws.

"Why do you seek to kill me?" he asked, on seeing their anger. The brutal answer smote upon his ears, "You are devil-possessed. Who wishes to kill you?" Discussion was wasted with minds in such a condition, and it was in vain that Jesus again referred to Moses, compared the performance of the rite of circumcision on the Sabbath, with the healing of a man, and appealed to them to judge of actions from an independent stand-point. Circumcision was an honoured custom; healing was a novelty, and therefore very wrong. Remove most persons out of their familiar leading-strings, and they are like chickens just hatched. They hardly know how to pick up their first grains.

In the course of these popular comments upon him, some observed that this man could not be "the Christ," as when he appeared none would know where he came from, just as in our own day, the second manifestation of his power would be at once disputed because it was said, "None know the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." True! and yet is it so impossible to discern the *voice of the spirit*? Jesus, in his own day, tried to lift up the minds of his hearers to a higher ideal of the Messiah, who would be one sent to utter new truths. The hearts of a few were touched, but that ideal was still far above them. Even the few said, — "When the Christ shall come, will he do *more signs* than those which this man has done?" Signs, in their estimation, were of far more importance than the heroism of his mission and his life of stainless virtue. As for the Pharisees, their hostility was becoming more marked than it had ever been before, and they despatched what may be called the detectives of the period to watch him. Again the criticisms resounded, and more com-

ments were expressed. Some thought that this must be "the Christ," and the rest that this was quite impossible, because Jesus came from Galilee. Another wise conclusion, precisely such as man, living as he does in the external, would be sure to recognise. Speculation, indeed, had long been rife about him, and many had admitted that he might be a reëmbodiment of one of the prophets, perhaps of Elijah, or inspired by the martyred John. But the expected Messiah, — no! That was beyond argument altogether.

The officers who were sent to arrest him were, however, held by the power around him, and, in reply to their employers, the Pharisees, they admitted that even they had been impressed. They had never heard any man speak like him! This only increased the annoyance of the Pharisees, and they angrily rejoined, "Are *you* also led astray? Have any *respectable* church-goers or priests believed in this person? The ignorance of the people is beyond belief, and a positive curse!" And the appeal of Nicodemus that even their own law gave him a fair hearing, they dismissed with the final declaration that "out of Galilee no prophet could arise;" and, therefore, that the question as to whether Jesus was the expected Messenger was at once and forever settled, no matter how he spoke, or what he did.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW MORALITY AND THE WAY TO THE "KINGDOM."

THE addresses of Jesus on this occasion were directed with special reference to all these disputes, hardly so much with a view to settle them, for that he saw was impossible, as to make a necessary statement — essential to human welfare and progress from that time to this — with regard to his claim. One thing is very certain, and history has written it with an iron finger; if Jesus was not the expected Man, the Jewish nation has never received its Messiah from that day to this. Religious theorists, however, do not see into the future.

Jesus argued the point to a certain extent, but it is easy to see he was often speaking a sort of foreign language to his hearers. He said that where he should go — to the world of spirit — they could not come, for they belonged to earth. They loved the earth: he was not of this world. To the earth belonged sins, imperfections, and death, — and they could not believe one who was trying to show them how to attain a more perfect life. "They would lift him up," alluding at last to the surely-coming cross, "and then they would know who he was." Then the light would shine, as it did shine, for evermore.

"The truth shall make you FREE!" he earnestly exclaimed to those who seemed to listen. Oh! golden words, which ought to be written on every human soul, so slow to grow and to learn, so fearful of its fellows, and so prone to fear the utterances of liberty, — when will our race dare to be "free?" The freedom of which Christ spoke was a divine freedom such as few realise; it was freedom from sin, weakness, the mortal crisis. Abraham's children they might profess to be,

but they were not so strong in their humanity, as he was in his. "Now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which God gave me,—which is more than Abraham did." If they knew God, who was and is Love, they would love him, for he was full of a divine purpose. "Why do you not understand my words?" Born in imperfection as they were, they would carry out the law of their organisation, even though it impelled them to reject light, and to murder. Only he who was of God could receive the spiritual light.

Then he again uttered the truth of truths: "If a man realises my teaching, he shall escape death!"

"Now," said the Jews, "we *know* you are possessed of a devil, for even Abraham and the prophets are dead, and you presume to say a man can escape death! It is false. Are you greater than all these holy persons?"

Jesus replied that Abraham had foreseen his work, and had rejoiced over it.

"How could he tell that? Had he seen Abraham? Another falsehood! What will he say next?"

The inspired speaker said to them boldly: "Before Abraham was, I existed!"

The conflict of the two powers, material and spiritual, closed with the endeavour to stone him, for the crimes of falsehood and blasphemy, and Jesus had to conceal himself until the rage of many among his audience had somewhat subsided.

In speaking of man's power to enter the eternal or spiritual life Christ simply uttered a profound philosophical and scientific truth; by developing his spiritual being, and living for the imperishable, rather than the mere material pleasures of the hour, man may win strength to live in the spiritual world, escape the reincarnation arising from the powerful material attractions of the planet, and avoid death. It is the attainment of individualisation, and individual immortality, wrested by the "strong man," who, as it were, forces an entry into the kingdom of heaven. "Straight is the gate," said he, "and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few

there be that find it!" The martyrs of all ages have found it, and it is the great law of compensation to those who have "passed through great tribulation" for the sake of light for others. Strong in their souls, "made perfect through suffering," they ascended from the stormy sea of human life on earth into the rest of a sphere where the purified alone can dwell. "Those were blessed," said Jesus, "who should be reproached of men, and evilly spoken of, for it had been the fate of the prophets and the reformers, and the result was heavenly life!" These laws are iron; they have been in action ever since our globe existed; matter is the only Gehenna, and freedom from it is rest. How often do we hear persons exclaim, "I have endured a *hell* in my life!" Numbers endure it, and it is rare indeed, to meet with a life which has not experienced, perhaps in silence, and unknown to all, soul-anguish, arising from the conflict between the spiritual and the material. Earthly happiness and luxury are sought with eagerness, — the pleasures of sense, the dreams of the present; and disappointment and affliction come and protect the spirit from its attachment to the delusive and unreal. The happiness which "passes understanding" is of the soul, and when the work of Christ is carried out in what is called the Millennial Age, the peace which will descend on earth will dwell in perfect spiritual man, to whom vice, and war, and selfishness, and sickness, and death, will be unknown. The knowledge of the laws of our own being is the shortest way to achieve our victories, and on these Christ shed an eternal illumination.

On several occasions Jesus restored the sight of thoroughly blind persons, — a possibility known only to spiritual science, and beyond the reach of lotions or the most skilful instruments of the surgeon's art. His next work was to restore the sightless eyes of a man blind from his birth, in which he merely used as a medium of the aura, a salve made of clay, which he moistened with his lips, advising him to bathe afterwards in the pool of

Siloam. As the man, who was accustomed to sit in a certain spot and ask for alms, was well known, of course the event attracted no little attention, especially as it was discovered that it had occurred, like other events of the same kind, on the sabbath. Jesus was known far and wide for his open disregard of this most sacred of all Jewish institutions. He was, therefore, a "sinner." The wonder was, in the opinion of the strict Jews, that he was able to perform such deeds. The man, relieved of his affliction, at first considered his great physician "a prophet," and on an examination into the facts which was speedily undertaken by the Sanhedrin, his parents asserted that their son had indeed been born blind, although they knew nothing about the person who had restored his vision, being, like many others, very careful not to array themselves on the unpopular side. Jesus was already regarded as hostile to the religious belief of the nation, and any acknowledgment of his claim to be the expected Messiah was, at this time, regarded as a sufficient reason for expulsion from the synagogue — "excommunication from the true faith." The blind man was questioned and cross-examined, and earnestly exhorted. "Listen to us, my friend! Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner. He is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." A strange, undesigned rebuke rang in the words of his reply. "Whether he be a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind — now I see." Answer enough, one would think! But the priests were annoyed at the *fact*; and, determined to do all they could to crush Jesus, they said, "We know that God has spoken unto Moses; but as for this man, we know nothing about him." The discussion closed with a storm, the man declaring that "since the world began, it was never heard that any one restored the sight of a person born blind, and that if this prophet were not from God, he could do nothing," and his inquisitors, beyond the pale of reasoning altogether, telling him that he was a sinner himself, and that his attempt to teach them was

presumption, "You are one of his followers, but we believe in Moses." Thereupon he was turned out of the place in disgrace.

When some of the Pharisees afterwards met Jesus he told them not only that they were blind themselves, but that their blindness was a sin. And he tried to enlighten the crowd around him once more by the parable of the shepherd and his flock. "I am the door," he said, "opening to a shelter for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for them." And, alluding to the Gentiles, he observed, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; these also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and they shall become one fold with one shepherd." The guardian of our planet, born with its birth, and shepherd of our race, he spoke with a love for all its children such as none have ever yet entertained. "I lay down my life that I may take it again," and demonstrate the great immortality; "I lay it down of my own will; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And it was true; he had.

To the Jews this was incomprehensible. Some said, "Why waste time in listening to him? He is either insane or possessed by an evil spirit." And no doubt they were far in the majority over those who answered, "These are not the words of a bad man. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Even those who were thus deeply indebted to him disregarded his earnest injunctions not to spread sensational reports which would merely excite curiosity. And some were ungrateful. Of the ten lepers who were healed, and who were not in an absolutely hopeless condition, like the many scores who dragged out their weary existence in seclusion and social ostracism, only one, the poor Samaritan, returned to bless him for the exercise of a holy gift. With a sigh, Jesus asked, "Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

While in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, where this conflict raged, and which was the very centre of opposi-

tion to the light of a new dispensation, Jesus often retired to the Mount of Olives, and to rest at night in the garden of Gethsemane. There he was removed from the influences of the city; its strife, its materialism, its hostility, and its ignorance, and beneath the wandering shadows of the olive-branches on the grassy slopes, he quietly sat, and thought, and prayed, or lost consciousness of friends and foes in hours of slumber. The climate made such retreats pleasant and practicable, and the secret was known to his loved and trusted companions. Greatly did he need such hours; the Son of Man had not "where to lay his head." The strain and fatigue of his mission, a sublime burden, was hourly increasing, and sometimes he would almost long for it to be over. "How am I constrained — impelled to go on — until this work be accomplished!" came from his lips with a heavy sigh. In his brief three years of labour he was literally forcing back the whole power of the most deeply-cherished beliefs and institutions of his race, and opening the heavy gateway of a new era for all people. In so doing, he suffered in every detail of his mission, and for him there was no rest.

The story of the woman who had committed the sin of adultery, although omitted in the oldest records remaining to us of the saviour-life, has been well included in the current editions. It was precisely the kind of test-case the Jews would be sure to have applied to a man who was notorious for his free companionship with the other sex. They wished to ascertain what his ideas of morality were, and whether he would really presume, also, in a new social order, to place his opinions above the laws of Moses. For the attempts of Jesus to interpret the reforms of their favorite prophet in a more spiritual sense, and to teach that he was in harmony with their *spirit*, the only true obedience to any laws, was almost in vain. The woman was triumphantly brought to him by Scribes and Pharisees, and accused of having committed the sin worthy of death. It was a crucial moment. Jesus felt his lips sealed, and stooping

down, was inspired to write something that was a guide to him. Instantly, seizing the necessities of the situation, demanding not only the endorsement of virtue, but of a true, as opposed to a false, or conventional, morality, he said, "Let him who is without sin among you, first cast a stone at her."

Probably the unseen spirit of Moses was his inspirer, for we know that they met and communicated with each other while Jesus was on earth. Men of the world — you who make respectable "marriages," and desert the girl-companions you have tempted, and flattered, and dazzled, with a year or two of your "love" and your gifts, — what of woman? Have you ever truly revered womanhood in any relation of life? Is the woman you have discarded more guilty, or are you? What is your system of "morals?"

Those eager Pharisees threw no stone, and one after another withdrew, and the woman and the pure man were left alone in each other's presence. "Where are they?" asked Jesus. "Did no man condemn you?" "No," replied the trembling woman. "Neither do I condemn you; go thy way and sin no more."

Evermore does this story stand forth as the banner of the great principle of the moral equality of man and woman. Who acts upon it? Who has taught it? Who dares to follow Christ? Oh, if but half the inspirations and actions of Jesus were welcomed by the "respectable people" of our earth, we should be whole degrees nearer to the reign of love, and unselfishness, and purity, for which we pray and of which we sing!

The teachings of Christ had, indeed, been of the most radical character, and it may be well at this point to pause and glance rapidly over them, so far as they are recorded, since, as a rule, they are not specially connected with any event, but were the spontaneous inspirations which came to him while wandering amid the towns and villages of a considerable portion of Palestine. A flower, a vessel, a common custom, a bird on the wing, were themes sufficient for thoughts which

came upon him with an uncontrollable power. The sermon on the Mount has been the consolation of scores of thousands of suffering hearts in every century; the poor, the mourners, the wearied, were yet to receive compensation for all they endured; the pure, the peacemakers, the persecuted, should yet be comforted: and the prophecy that those who should be reproached and spoken against for his sake—that is, for following in his footsteps, and carrying on his reformatory work—would be blessed in receiving the sign of that cross on which victory is marked, has been fulfilled in the history of the early Christians, and the martyrs of Europe. They were the salt, “the light,” and they suffered and passed through their hours of bitterness not in vain. Those who received honor from men were the false prophets who supported popular systems rather than true principles.

The new spiritual law of love more than fulfilled the old, the Mosaic law and the prophets. It was the righteousness of the inner life, the absence of *desire* to commit wrong which made the real fulfilment. No outer confirmation could lead to the “kingdom of heaven.” “Thou shalt not murder,” included the absence of anger in the spirit; “thou shalt not commit adultery,” included chastity of thought. To their enemies all must be kind and generous; revenge was wrong, “for the Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Men’s actions would bring their own reward; they would be “measured to them again.” Religious ceremonials led to hypocrisy, and the prayer of the soul in secret was the one which called forth an answer from above. His own prayer, given in illustration, all men know. It was a prayer for the harmony of soul and body which creates the true kingdom, and for the daily life of love. Alas, a thousand times, that it should have degenerated into a gabbled *Pater Noster*!

Things of earth were not to be the sole sources of

attention and anxiety; they drew the spirit to material things and hindered the growth of the real being. "The life" was more than food, and the "body" than raiment; the real man than his material possessions. "Consider the lilies," said he, "they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Man, in his perfection, would be as they are; he would neither "toil nor spin," for the kingdom and its righteousness would bring the powers which would liberate, and add "all things unto him."

Human judgments of others were harsh and cruel; and those who were most ready to slander were most guilty themselves. Prayer and aspiration drew the spirit to the higher life; "ask and it should be given." The "kingdom must be sought." Whatever they would men should do to them that also should they do themselves, for this fulfilled the letter and spirit of the law, and the glad voice of prophecy. "Choose the upward path, however narrow, for it leads to the eternal life, and few there be that find it."

The publican who repented of wrong-doing in his very soul and prayed, was nearer to the good than the Pharisee who thanked God he was not extortionate, and trusted in external actions; the outcast Samaritan, who rescued the wounded man and felt compassion for his suffering neighbour, carried out the spirit of the law more truly than the priest and the Levite, who had no time to show humanity; the man who built barns and increased in wealth thought not of the future, and that true life consisted not in the abundance of his possessions; the wealth of earth and the creeds of earth served but to deprive the spirit of its wings. Hypocrisy was useless, for the time would come when there should be no secrets; hidden good should be visible to all, and hidden evil. The wisdom of the most secret orders should be the common property of men; and the wrongs of the oppressed which found no voice should

be heard, and the wrong-doers, however concealed among time-honoured customs and institutions, become visible in their nakedness.

Truth must be recognised by its fruits, for the time would come when many would attach themselves to his name who possessed none of his spirit. These prophetic words have indeed been fulfilled in "church Christianity." Three hundred years after the return of Christ to the unseen world the church fell from the spirit into the external, and those who followed him were the persecuted martyrs and reformers, those ready to lose "the hand" or "the foot" for pure liberty, and who pressed forward in his footsteps in the "narrow way." Many wonderful works have been done; the church has had saints, visions, spiritual manifestations, and has uttered the word "Lord" in reverence for his name; but it has killed and tortured by millions the best among men and women. It is impossible to doubt the *ascetic* purity and the self-sacrifice of some of the saints of the Roman Church, but they did not possess the Christ-liberty of soul, which works, not for the glory of any organisation, but for freedom and reform; and Wycliffe, and Luther, and Galileo have known far more of this spirit than they. Can indeed a church which only so recently as the year 1879 refused canonisation¹ to Joan of Arc because her inspirations, which she declared from first to last were from God, came in freedom, (itself a heresy)—possess any true estimation of the human soul? "*I fear nothing but treachery,*" were her words. And who was the traitor? A fellow-countryman, and an ecclesiastical dignitary eager to sweep away the detested heresy of free inspiration from the face of the earth. The strong spirits of Europe are all uncanonised, and have required, and do require no authority save the seal of the truth. In the good works

¹ Among those enrolled in the Kalendar, are Constantine, the murderer of several relations, Cyril the murderer of Hypatia, and Alphonse da Liguori, the casuist. It is not difficult to see on what principles canonisation has been based. Submission to the church and work in its interests are the paramount claims.

of visiting the sick and the poor, there have been no more devoted and self-sacrificing men and women than the adherents of the church of Rome ; all know the goodness of heart manifested by members of her sisterhoods, and many of her priests. Yet the scientific knowledge, the free power of mind, so bitterly opposed by that church in the past, has done more for humanity than all the organisations she ever founded. Free thought and free inspiration are abhorred by her ; for the sick man, or the poor, she has had medicines, homes and alms ; for the heretic who studied nature, and fearlessly listened to her voice, she showed no mercy ; for him she had the dungeon, the instrument of torture, and the stake. She worshipped one woman, yet dishonoured womanhood in the compulsory celibacy of her priesthood ; she excluded woman from her pulpits and her altars, and with her for ever the true spirit of love. The true church of Christ has been the free church of the Spirit, and this includes every human life, which has been honestly pledged to speak and work for human welfare and reform, no matter whether endorsed by ecclesiastical organisations or not. It is the house "built upon a rock," which will endure ; while the societies that stifle humanity with external systems, however powerful, cannot face the searching light of advancing science and progress, and are trembling on a foundation of sand. Only the strongest could really follow Christ, could say, like the Samaritan of old—"I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and unlike him, act upon it with unflinching faith, and they, even as Jesus, were fain to say also "the world welcomed them not." "The foxes have had holes, and the birds of the air have had nests ; but the Son of Man has not had where to lay his head."

On many occasions Jesus referred to the inevitable suffering a true adherence to such liberty as he taught would entail. "Beware of men," he said, "for they will deliver you up to councils, and will scourge you ; yes, and before governors and kings will you be brought for my sake,"—before the very strongholds of earthly

power. The master had been counted as possessed of an evil spirit, and those of his household would be even more charged with the same condition. "Some would be put to death," and "they would be hated of all men for his sake," yet he who endured to the end should be victorious. For sometimes even the death of the body purchased the new life of the soul.

The work was such as would cause divisions in families, and strife in the world, yet the cross must be borne by those inspired to carry it, and the eternal life would often be attained by those who yielded up their mortal breath for the sake of freedom of conscience or of truth, even as did Perpetua, and Hypatia, Cecco d'Ascoli, John Huss, Ridley, and Michael Servetus. Of such were the "little ones," and some of them, especially the last-named, and the most inspired, received not even "a cup of cold water" from his persecutors. The great end of these sufferings would be rest to the toilers, and heavy-laden, and this will one day be attained.

Sometimes a human feeling of impatience came over the great Teacher, as, filled as he was with interior illumination, he wrestled with the dull, materialistic dogmas of the devout. Then it was that he used severe language, which was unquestionably a cause of offence to many, and deepened the dislike and apprehension with which he was regarded by the Jews of Jerusalem. He spoke with authority, for he well knew that he represented the temple of humanity. "One greater than the temple," or the Sabbath was there. And when he was asked for a sign of his claim, he replied that it was written in his own being. A greater than Jonah, a greater than Solomon, stood at last among them, and the cross and the victory would be the only real signs of that royalty which knows no crown, and asks for no sceptre. He embodied what the sages of a mighty past had looked for, and longed to see, and had not been able to witness. And his presence was indeed a fulfilment of the signs of the times, so rarely, it may be said, never, realised in the way in which men anticipate.

The intense pride and self-sufficiency of the sacerdotal authorities whom he sought to enlighten, made Christ declare that those who really belonged to the heavenly kingdom, possessed the spirits of little children, teachable, full of trust and love, willingness to be led, and capacity to learn and to grow. This very capacity would be an offence, an occasion of stumbling, yet the offence must needs come. It was better to be like them, to throw off any chains, to discard what was nearest and most sacred, than to remain in the gehenna of a life so material and full of trouble as this. The life of the spirit in the immortal kingdom was worth any struggles and sacrifices in this world. With a love that welcomed and clung to anything that was as yet unstained and uninjured by the false moralities of men, he took little children in his arms, exclaiming with a passion of feeling, "Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven!" Nor did the affection with which he clasped their tender forms lack the heart-throb which ever comes to the man who is not a father, and who realises the divine condition of parentage.

The few direct observations he made on the social relations of man and woman show the strong intuitions of perfect manhood, combined with a seer's wisdom. In reply to the questionings of those who believed in what they considered sacred legal formalities, the son of a free marriage remarked that the masculine and feminine principles existed "from the beginning," and that man and woman were intended to be united in true marriage. Moses had to deal with things as they were. But "what *God* had joined together, let not man put asunder," said he. How many have been divinely united? Can the Church make a marriage, or the law? What is the real "sacrament?" The union of spirit, and these alone are "one flesh."

In the letter of Clement, a follower of Peter, and contemporary of Paul, the remarkable words are recorded that, on being asked when his kingdom should come,

Christ replied, "When the two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female:" one in soul. In the light of true marriage, all other relations were adulterous, and merely physical in character, yet he realised that man was so organised as to be unable to reach up to that life and love of the spirit. The only continence he was able to maintain was the negative continence of incapacity, and that was only incompleteness. The most strictly enforced life of continence, indeed, pales before the glory of the true marriage, which re-creates. But the hour had not come for the manifestation of this last and most sublime of realities. Jesus was no ascetic. He was alone, because for him there was no mate, and consecrated to one great end, he was lifted above all thoughts of that rest which comes to man in his love for woman, and wife, and child.

In connection with the above incident may also be considered the manner in which he replied to the Sadducees, the exclusive and cultured materialists of his time, with regard to the consequences of repeated "marriages" in the case of a widow. If there was an unseen life, what would become of the woman with seven husbands? Whose wife would she be? For ignorance and folly this can only be matched by the conceptions of those who realise not the great life of the spirit in our own time. Grand was the answer of Jesus, and signal the defeat of his incredulous questioners: "You greatly err! In the spiritual world they do not enter into the marriage of earth, but of heaven — and they are as the angels — free, united in spirit, and in holy love. And concerning this world you know not, do you not recall that the Eternal One is the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the *living*. Ye do greatly err! They are alive." A clearer view of the real nature of the "resurrection" has never been given; nor a more beautiful conception of true marriage.

The true social relation is the religion of the world; and the marriage of the future will be such as to know

no divorce, and, like the union of "the angels," it will ask the benediction and the sanction of neither church nor state.

It was not easy to teach, as Jesus thus did, on all occasions, that "the first should be last, and the last first." It struck at the very root of the hopes, beliefs, and claims of the self-righteous and severe, who are the last to show the spirit of compassion and forgiveness to others. Even Peter had to enlarge his ideas of the forgiveness of wrongs, from seven times to "seventy times seven," or an ever-ready willingness to return good for evil. Few reach even half a dozen "times" in their relations with their fellows. To forgive deliberate injuries, repeatedly inflicted upon us, requires a god-like spirit of love. Yet, as Christ truly explained to the rich man who questioned him, the eternal life is attained by those who love their neighbours as themselves, since love carries out and goes far beyond external laws. Seeing the man clung to his wealth, Jesus advised him to break his chains by distributing it to others, since it drew his spirit towards material things, but he could not summon up courage to make so great a sacrifice. It is hard for those who possess much which attracts them strongly to this world, to rise and remain in a purer sphere. The spirit goes to its own place, whether its home be here or there. The hour of death shows whether the "lamps" be trimmed or not.

His own special companions could not always comprehend the philosophy of Christ, although to them he often unfolded "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." It was something connected with a condition they did not fully understand, — a condition of spiritual development, almost a religion of science, which was beyond them. Their ideas of salvation were occasionally of that empirical order which has so long been popular in the churches and chapels, and some of the questions were as full of materialism in their way, as those of the Pharisees. This, of course, was natural and inevitable. Peter wished to know what they

should have as a reward, for acting so differently from their rich visitor. The vision of Jesus fell on a coming age, and he told them their reward would be greatest when they witnessed the completion of his mission, the "regeneration" of the world, when he should appear in his "glory," that is, fully revealed as the light of the human race. Those who followed him, even at a late period of their lives, or in centuries to come, would still belong to the spiritual kingdom, which knew nothing of ambition, or envy, or jealousy, but gave to each his natural due. Those who were persecuted, would win riches in the spirit, and "in the world to come eternal life." As for the request of the mother with her two sons, he could only say that those who desired to be nearest to him must drink of his cup of sorrows, and he had nothing to do with the results, which came by a divine law. Finally, he told them all that ambition had no place in him or his, and that he had himself been incarnated to give his life for the sake of the liberation of others.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DIVINE WORK, AND MORTAL HATRED.

THE time was now not far off when the consummation of the great mission of Jesus was to take place, and he more than once plainly told his chosen companions that, so far from being recognised as the expected Messiah of his nation, he should be tried and condemned to death at Jerusalem, although this last and most terrible ordeal would only result in the triumph of the truth. It was a very sad revelation to them, and his emphatic declaration that the real life was worth the whole world, did but little to reassure their minds. His words were received with sighs, and the far-off end to be attained, the return of Christ to the earth with angel-messengers, and the true judgment of the deeds of the centuries which would intervene, must have sounded to them like the promise of manhood made to a child who is engrossed with the sailing of a toy ship. Some of them, he said, by way of consolation, would enter into the spiritual life and there rest until those prophecies of his were fulfilled. They would be drawn to earth no more, and never again taste the bitterness of death.

With the view of illustrating to them more clearly these varied truths concerning immortality, Jesus selected one or two of them, and ascended a mountain height, where, amid the silence and stillness of a purer air, there appeared to them the spirits of Moses, and Elijah (or John), both of whom were among his guardian angels, and who were deeply interested in, and strongly supporting his efforts to lift the Jews above the level of the Levitical law and its endless observances.

The voice which spoke with the love of fatherhood was higher still. The time will come when the one who spoke from that cloud of light, and who said, "This is my son,—the chosen one,"—will be made known. Jesus himself shone with a beautiful radiance, and received strength for the rapidly-approaching conflict. Then the spirits became invisible, and the little group saw nothing but the familiar form of the Nazarene. The extreme drowsiness experienced by his companions shows that, as on another occasion, elements were drawn from them to aid in the manifestation. Jesus himself opened the communication between the two worlds, and his spirit-friends conversed with him about the coming event in that blind city on the plains beneath. We can imagine how they inspired him with his victory, how they counselled him to be strong to the last, and how they spoke of the grand object of his life. Christ was not one of those who refused to listen "though one rose from the dead," and none understood "Moses and the prophets" so well as he. It was indeed part of his work to reveal the unknown and unseen.

As they descended the mountain he enjoined a wise silence for a time with regard to what they had witnessed, and in answer to their question as to the expected reappearance of Elijah before the Messiah, he referred to the law of incarnation, in his reply that Elijah *had* appeared, unrecognised, and had been martyred by his own nation. They understood who the martyr was,—the fearless John the Baptist. Let any one compare the life of the earlier prophet with that of John, and they will recognise the same strong, independent spirit, full of fire, full of light, born to finish a work which had been commenced many centuries before.¹ Great reformers do not appear suddenly; their

¹ Jesus had once before said to his companions and others, "If you are able to understand it, this" (John) "is Elijah, who was to appear" (Matt. xi., 14). There is an apparent contradiction, however, in John i., 21, in which the Baptist himself said, before he met the Nazarene, that he was not Elijah, but only "a voice" for the truth. Both statements may be reconciled in the

lives have gathered strength and endurance from an unseen but imperishable past, and they are able to stand when others would fall, because they are spiritually ripe for their mission. Spiritual evolution, the key of physical evolution, solves every problem which has been pondered by reflecting minds, including the ripe intuitions of some minds, and the blind materialism of others, the phenomena of savage life, the sufferings of animals, and the growth and refinement of planetary material. Nothing perishes; nothing suffers in vain; nothing is lost; nothing fails; there is ETERNAL JUSTICE. The human spirit, after it is once formed, never loses its identity, and increases in individualisation as it wins its experiences. One martyr-life of struggle will achieve more than a dozen common lives of smooth and calm events. Bodies exist in countless millions and vanish with the elements of which they are composed; spirits are comparatively few, for God in nature is the Arch-Economist, and the object of the physical is the elimination and perfection of spirit.

Many cannot receive this view of nature. It may be well to recite the story of one animal, whose heroism of love, restored it to its home and its master, and enabled it to face a thousand sufferings. "A favourite dog, a Scotch terrier called Medore, had been given by its owner to the keeping of a friend during his absence, but the friend was unfortunately called away from home and lost his pet. On the return of the owner, and some time after the event, a miserable half-starved dog, covered with scars and bruises, had persisted in scraping at his door, and the servant, being annoyed at its persistence, kicked the dog downstairs repeatedly. But, as soon as it recovered from its fall, it returned to the door, and renewed the scratching. Whenever the gentleman entered or left the house, the creature kept jumping upon him and trying in every way to attract his at-

fact that a great seer will sometimes recognise and declare a remarkable incarnation which is previously unknown for a wise purpose, to the consciousness of the individual concerned. The powers above did not desire that the Christ should be openly identified by any external sign.

tion. At last an idea flashed across his mind. Could this disreputable looking animal be by any possible chance the dog which had been lost at —? He fixed his eyes upon it, and said 'Medore!' The dog gave a piercing cry, and fell at his feet. He picked it up, carried it into the house, and laid it gently on the sofa. But the poor animal was dead."

If that poor worn carcase was the all of its little life, *where is justice?* And if there be no justice even for one of God's creatures, how can man himself be sure he will receive it? No! "even the sparrows are cared for." In the end all wrongs, and griefs, and martyrdoms disappear in free and glorious life. And in the era of the coming race, death, and the "gehenna" of imprisonment will be cast into the elements and disappear, since man will be liberated, and subject to the old laws of a purely physical organisation no more.

The companions of Jesus felt sure that some great triumph was in store for him, and whatever it was, they believed they should share it. Which of them, they once privately questioned each other, would be the most highly honoured? He saw their weakness, and drawing a little child to his side, he told them that the simplicity and faith of a child was the only condition befitting those who followed him. He should not be honoured at that time, far from it. "Let these words sink into your ears," said he: "I shall be seized and condemned at the hands of men! I shall be crucified—although after three days I shall arise again!" But as yet the mournful prophecy seemed incredible, and fell on deaf ears.

We may turn to the closing scenes of the life of the man whose brief and concentrated struggle with the materialism of the world was a symbol of the prolonged struggles and sufferings of our whole race. His indifference to any external honours was more than once manifested, in the first instance, to his companions, in the second, to the suspicious Pharisees;

and must have seemed very strange to those who believed the Jewish Messiah would be an earthly monarch. On the half-shekel being demanded for the service of the temple at Jerusalem, he paid it without hesitation; and the discovery of the coin in the fish was the result of an impression given to him at a moment when he was at a loss to know how to provide the money. The second instance was on the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem, when on being craftily examined as to his fidelity to the Roman authority, he simply replied, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." A world-wide mission had nothing in common with a local and temporary effort for free government; and the larger work of liberty would include the smaller. Yet he was in constant danger from this accusation of sedition, and it was a useful weapon in the hands of those whose religious prejudices had been aroused. The cry of "selfish individualism," is sure to be thrown at those whose lives have been most sacrificed to truth for others, and those who employ it are eager for one thing only—to oppose any method of manifesting its light which is not in accordance with their own desires, aims, and ideas. The indignation of the haughty Jews at Jerusalem, on hearing the claim made by an obscure, and in their eyes insignificant man, at the very time when their hopes were filled with visions of their country's triumph and the pageantry of a royal presence, can hardly be realised. Their ideal of manhood was a Solomon, a great prince, a strong warrior, a man of large frame and mighty muscle, a hero, and a national prophet,—and this pale, spiritual-looking Galilean who was at work to overthrow old customs and sacred beliefs, they looked upon with absolute contempt. They could understand the whirlwind, and the fire, but not the mighty power of "the still, small voice." And their brothers exist now and are everywhere to be seen, for the strength of the inner life is without sign, and silent and unseen.

That Jesus succeeded in strongly influencing a certain number of persons beyond the immediate circle of his special friends, is shown by the missionary work with which he commissioned, at one time, no less than seventy individuals. But their success must have been small, and they probably only served to aid in forming a small congregation of believers in the new faith after the crucifixion. Few could really follow him; hardly any understood words which had a deep and eternal significance.

Creeds and superstitions go hand-in-hand. The sad fate of the Galileans, who had been executed by Pilate, and whose blood had mingled with the blood of the temple-sacrifice, was looked upon, not as an event which should excite compassion and regret, but as a particular judgment on the hapless victims. Jesus at once endeavoured to teach those who thus appealed to him for his opinion, that calamities were by no means associated with special misdoings, a lesson which many priests who "improve" public misfortunes to their congregations, would do well to ponder. "All," said he, "should be ready when called away from the life of earth," otherwise they were but as barren fig-trees who formed obstacles to the growth and progress of others.

When present at the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem, he was openly asked by the Jews, who, however, had no intention of changing their convictions, whether he did or did not claim to be their Messiah. What could he say? With a sigh of utter weariness he pointed out all he had done, and we may be sure this was anything but a decisive argument to them. "You do not believe it," he said. "You are not my sheep! Those who do follow me can attain the eternal life, and none can remove them from me. My spirit is indeed of God." In the actual text, it is written, "I and my Father are one," which may be interpreted as above. It was the god-like condition possible to man of union with the Divine Soul. The literal acceptance of the words was the cause of the immediate attempt to stone him, and together with

certain interpolations at the close of the gospels, one of the causes of the subsequent lamentable formulations of the Trinitarianism of three centuries afterwards. The very explanation Jesus himself gave shows their true spiritual meaning. But the Jews did not reason; nor did many of the unillumined churchmen at Nice. It was in vain that he showed them that *man* can be divine; and that the Eternal Spirit did breathe in him. They endeavoured to arrest him for blasphemy, and he had to retire, and withdraw on the other side of the Jordan.

The most remarkable manifestation of his power, one which indeed brought fatal results, took place just after this. Among his warmest friends were the two sisters and their brother, who lived at Bethany, a village within easy distance from Jerusalem, and it was in the home of Martha and Mary, and Lazarus, that he often rested after the arduous toil of the day. They belonged to that simple and harmonious class of persons, who, not positive in thought or action themselves, believed all that appeared good to them, without arguing or questioning, and their sphere of love and devotion must have been very restful to the tried feelings and tired frame of Jesus. Mary in particular was an eager listener to his new thoughts and teachings, and all were wont to welcome him and wait on him in their retired dwelling. How different had been the words of Jesus to her, compared with those of the Rabbi Eliezer, who, in answer to the inquiries of a woman, replied, "No other wisdom is becoming to a woman than the distaff!"

A sad shadow had just fallen on the little home. Lazarus, the brother, still hardly in the prime of life, had fallen sick and died. Jesus knew of the event by spiritual intimation, and announced his intention of restoring his spirit to the body. "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep," he said to his companions; and then he added, "Lazarus is dead. But I am glad I was not there, that I may be able to do what will increase your faith."

Martha and Mary, however, thought very differently. On hearing that Jesus was on his way to them, Martha went out to meet him, and expressed their bitter regret that he had been absent at the time. "Oh! if you had been here, our brother had not died!" He comforted her, but all she could do was to acquiesce, like so many mourners, with the vague words of a despairing hope, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," for she did not know that the spirit lives on, and "arises" the moment it is free from the physical form, and that "ashes go to ashes," and "dust to dust," and are effaced in a million other forms. She was, however, destined to witness what has been very rare in the history of our planet; the recalling of the spirit to the form after the hour of their divorce. It was part of the work of Jesus as the wage of war against "the last enemy," and gave him strength and confidence for the great approaching crisis of his own life. "I am the resurrection and the life!" he said, "he that believeth on me, though he were 'dead,' yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die!" Man can assail even death, and overcome it. And Martha replied, "*Thou art the man!*"

Then Mary, the woman of all others who was most tenderly regarded by Jesus, as looking upon him with a pure love and faith, which were like the breath of incense, and given him by very few, also went forth to meet him, and the thought which had possessed both their minds broke from her also in a deep lament, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Even Jesus was overcome by human feeling, and intense sympathy for the two troubled sisters, and he wept for the moment himself. There is no shadow so dark as the shadow of death! Some naturally thought that Jesus might have cured Lazarus in his sickness, but he was led of the Spirit, and his words and deeds were guided by angel-power. With an intensity of will, and faith, and prayer, he went out and approached the grave, and realising the light and force around him, said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Thou

hearest me always. Lazarus! come forth!" And the man who had been dead and wrapped in grave-clothes, stirred with the life of the spirit, and arose.

This event materially differs from the other instances recorded of this extraordinary power of Christ, since it did not occur immediately after the last breath had been drawn, but some little time after, although hardly two or three days. In an Eastern climate such a period would involve an advanced stage of decomposition, and the restoration of the spirit to an actually corrupting body would violate a law of nature. Disintegration is something more than the departure of the spirit; it is the death of the particles of the body, and we cannot suppose that such was the condition of Lazarus. The process must have been arrested by some natural force, on which a coming science will throw a perfect light, and the nature of the illness must have been such as to have left the form in a condition to be thus acted upon. The very sad consequences which took place assure us that all this, strange as it seems, was true.

That the event was unusually marked, and created a great sensation is proved by the results. The home of Mary was visited by all sorts of curious persons, and the apprehensions of the Jews at Jerusalem were seriously aroused. Even the chief priest held a consultation with the Pharisees on the matter, and decided that something must be done to crush the perpetual agitation of the public mind with regard to the Nazarene. If he were allowed to go on, the result would be that he, of all persons, — the last they desired — would be proclaimed a king, and this would draw down on them the Roman legions. Caiaphas, the high-priest, speedily arrived at the only decision possible to them, and uttering words the meaning of which he little realised, declared that the interests of the nation undoubtedly required the sacrifice of a single person. Jesus could not deliver them. He was no warrior. He would only be the means of their destruction. During that brief meeting of the Sanhedrin his fate was sealed.

CHAPTER IX.

ATTACKING THE STRONGHOLD.

IMPRESSED with a feeling of extreme danger, Jesus immediately withdrew into seclusion, and just before the time of the passover, he was watched for within the great city. Many wondered whether he would dare to attend the feast, for they well knew his fearlessness. The opportunity of Judas had also arrived, for orders had been given that Jesus should be at once secretly arrested if he could be found. Judas had long entertained doubts about the mission of Christ, and he agreed with the remarks he heard among the stricter Jews, that he was really overthrowing every revered institution of Israel, and could not possibly therefore be a real Messiah to the nation. The willing ear he lent to these observations brought him within the psychological sphere of a powerful opposition, and earth-bound spirits, eager as when in the form, for what they believed to be the glory of their church and people, marked him, and followed him wherever he went, in order that the work they hoped to carry out should be more surely accomplished. Opposition was destined to enter the very stronghold of that "little flock" to whom "the kingdom" had been promised; but its success could only be ensured by a shameful betrayal.

The signs of annoyed feeling showed the influences at work around Judas. On the occasion of the pleasant little gathering in which the weary Jesus met Lazarus and his sisters in their home at Bethany, (the correct version is given by John), for the last time, he was present. Mary celebrated their common joy by pouring a perfumed ointment which was very costly, over

the feet of the man who had been her best and dearest friend, and the fragrance filled the house like sunshine. Judas, who fully realised by this time that "following Christ" meant nothing but self-sacrifice and tribulation, and furnished as he considered, no sort of opening for his own personal honour or ambition, was displeased at the devotion expressed in this act. With a pretended zeal for superior good, he asked "why the ointment had not been sold, and the money *given to the poor*." It is said that he was a "thief." Whether he really was or not, in the common meaning of the word, one thing is certain, that he was surrounded by influences, which, in the interests of ecclesiasticism, had no scruples about robbing the people of a divine light. To destroy truth and liberty has ever appeared to those pledged to priest-craft to be a virtuous effort, justifying treachery, secret machinations, and under cover of benevolence and virtue, of eager, underhand attempts to misrepresent the defenceless; and the Jewish Sanhedrin never dreamed that the spirit of Moses himself, their honoured leader and deliverer, was ever near, and ever strengthening, the despised Nazarene. He had led ancient Israel out of a cruel bondage, and he hailed one who was incarnated to deliver the world.

The soul of Judas was a small one, but it was not wholly evil. He had felt a genuine attraction for the strong and gentle spirit of Christ; he had been content to brave even certain of the current prejudices for the sake of what he at first thought would be a grand result; he had sacrificed something himself, and his impulses were at times in a right direction. But he had been brought within a fatal circle, in his weak attention to the private conferences of the antagonistic priests; and the spirit of the past, in utter hatred of all that Christ said and represented, had laid its iron hand upon him. There can be no compromise between a supreme work for liberty and a stereotyped church. And Judas, whose vacillation had been eagerly watched, was now held by

a power which forced him to the issue, as a higher power forced Jesus also to his.

As Jesus passed through Jericho, a tax-farmer, of small stature, climbed up into a tree to see this much-talked-of prophet, who was surrounded by a motley crowd. He immediately saw the man, and signified his intention of taking a meal with the despised publican. The people at once declared that he "had gone in to lodge with a man who was a sinner." "What mistakes he makes; what associates he chooses!" We all know these well-worn criticisms. Poor Zaccheus, who was very conscious of the wrong-doings of his class, told Jesus that he was not one of the extortioners; that he gave away half of his means to the poor, and made restitution to any who had been unjustly taxed. The "prophet" replied, "Then you are a true son of Abraham, and care for your own! And as for me—I have come to seek and to rescue those who are counted among the lost!" Be sure the heart of the tax-farmer warmed to him with love, and be sure the story was known that very night as another of the "crimes" of Jesus, to the indignant rabbis of the holy city!

The drama of that time was an intensely human one. In lesser degree, it has been acted over and over again in the history of Europe, in the long fight between the free and the enslaved. Those who dream the history of the Nazarene is a myth, must be blind indeed to the human feelings portrayed in every page of the old records, and it is almost needless to say that the whole story is the last one which would have entered the mere imagination of the most extraordinary man of genius.

Jesus well knew the secret plots against him, and he clearly recognised, and had indeed been forewarned, of their inevitable result. The case of Lazarus had excited great interest among the common and, of course, the "ignorant" people; and the priests of Jerusalem were so deeply annoyed at the fresh wave of enthusiasm which ever alternated with storms of bitter opposition

around Jesus, that they would gladly have got rid of Lazarus himself. To Judas, on whom all these influences were poured, and with whom Christ knew it would be useless to reason, he simply and gently said, on the occasion of this anointment, "Let this woman alone! It is a memorial of my burial, although she knows it not. The poor are always with you, but I shall be removed."

The accounts of the event vary, as did the reports of one or two other incidents in the life of Jesus, but that may be adhered to which has been given through the instrumentality of John. It was but natural that the sisters of Lazarus should seek to show, in some palpable form, their gratitude, nor did they dream that in so doing, they had acted out a prophecy.

The appointed hour of the consummation of the mission of Christ was rapidly approaching. He had done all that was possible among the towns and villages of the provinces, and it was necessary that he should publicly encounter the stronghold of Jewish orthodoxy in Jerusalem. Every circumstance forced him to it; and with an inspired courage, he steadfastly resolved to go up openly to the haughty and indifferent city, and meet the consequences whatever they might be. If he must be sacrificed, it should be there; none should say he feared any human blindness or antagonism. To his little band of followers he said again, and more plainly than ever,—“We are going to Jerusalem, and there I shall be seized by the priestly authorities, and shall be condemned; and I shall be delivered to the Roman power, and suffer insult, and scourging, and crucifixion. *But I shall rise again!*”

It was then that he was accompanied by a crowd of persons from Galilee, who, from varied reasons had followed him from place to place, and who had congregated together at Bethany. It was in the midst of something almost approaching to a procession, and mounted upon an ass, an animal which, in contrast to the horse, was a symbol of peace, that he came in sight of the

well-known buildings, and dome of the Temple, for the last time. With a deep human feeling of love for his country, and its far-famed centre of life and power, he was overcome even to tears; and it was then that he paused, and uttered the touching lament, born of a vision of the coming years, "If thou hadst known in this day—even thou, the things which belong unto peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes!"

He saw with an inner sight the Roman legions, the siege, and the "compassed city," "hedged round on every side," and the murdered Jews; and at last the ruin and desolation by fire, and unceasing attacks upon the walls until "not one stone was left upon another." Had Jesus been welcomed in that city, he might have succeeded in rescuing it from its terrible fate, through his spiritual insight and the confidence which would have been reposed in him by its leaders. But it was not to be. With his own doom, the doom of the proud city was sealed.

This public entrance caused a stir even within its indifferent walls, and enquiries were at once made as to who it was who was the centre of attraction. We can picture the effect of the reply, "The prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee!" The restoration of Lazarus had caused this temporary excitement, and at last even the Pharisees began to think that Jesus was about to obtain the much-dreaded recognition of the people, who "hung upon him, listening." They remarked to each other, "What can we do—the world has gone after him!"

If, however, they expected some extraordinary manifestation on his part they were mistaken. Christ had accomplished his last great work of spiritual power for others. And instead of showing anything likely to interest curiosity-seekers, he commenced a final series of addresses, which were more outspoken and radical than before, and which were the means of dissipating this passing breath of enthusiasm, and speedily throwing the ability to injure him into the

hands of the authorities. The voice of the Spirit weighed both people and priests "in the balances," and all were alike "found wanting." And the lack of courage in those who were really impressed, we can only too well realise in the words that they "did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." A very old story; the cowardice of those who should hold together as brothers in a holy cause, has made many a martyr stand alone.

To his own followers he said, and to many others, that "the hour had come when he should be victorious!" "If the grain dies, it bears much fruit. Yet my very soul suffers, — but what can I say? I long to be delivered from the ordeal, yet for its sake I am here!" It is stated that a voice was heard in reply which was not of earth, and which said that the divine work *should* be victorious; and that some sound at the time attracted the attention of others, though they knew not what it was. "If I am lifted up," said Jesus, "I shall draw all men to the truth."

He again endeavoured to free the temple from the vendors of offerings, — and if offerings were essential to the well-being of the worshippers, why should they not have been there? It was a practical rebuke to a useless system; and the vexation of the strict Jews was responded to by Christ in language which was more forcible than ever. The Sanhedrin requested to know his authority for such actions, and the reply was hardly calculated to appease its members. Jesus asked whether the work of John was "from heaven, or of men?" In the popular estimation John was regarded as a prophet. Naturally, they wished to avoid a public decision, and Jesus refused to point out the source of his own authority. In fact it would have been useless for him to have done so.

He commenced to illustrate his teaching by parables, which were aimed at the creed-bound minds of the Pharisees. "It was easier," said he, "for publicans

and prostitutes to enter into the kingdom of God than for them;" and, even in our own time, such an assertion, however true, from the mouth of any reformer would be likely to create a storm. He spoke of the vineyard and the two sons, one of which represented the Pharisees; of the wine-press and the householder, who sent many persons (prophets) to his vineyard, and finally his son, whom they killed; and he asked whether the "rejected stone" was not in truth the "head of the corner." To the only scribe who seemed to have recognised the character of his teaching, and welcomed it, he had plainly said, that "love of God and man was the whole law, and that there was no commandment so great as this."

And, again, he gave the story of the marriage feast, the invitation to which was refused; how others would be invited, and the disastrous result to those who despised it. "Many are called," said he, "but few are chosen." Many come in contact with the power of truth: few are ripe enough to accept it.

One can picture the feelings with which such words as those recorded in the writings of Matthew were received. "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, but do not ye after their works, for they *say and do not*. They do nothing themselves, but bind grievous observances on others. They seek to engross attention for their piety; they broaden their phylacteries; enlarge the borders of their garments; love the chief places at feasts, the chief seats in the synagogues, respectful salutations from the people, — and to be looked upon as leaders! Call no man master, for you are all brothers! The principles represented in the Messiah — deliverance, *liberty* — are the only guides." And he denounced in impassioned language the result of priest-craft. "You shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you enter not in yourselves, neither do you suffer others who are willing to enter; you have lost the key of your sacred writings and traditions, and understand them not. You compass sea and land to make one

proselyte; and when it is done, you make him twice over more a son of hell (darkness) than yourselves. You tithe mint, and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, right judgment, mercy, and faith; you are blind guides who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! Hypocrites, you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within you are full of extortion and excess. You are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. And, although you build the sepulchres of the prophets whom your fathers killed, you are of the same spirit and their own sons. How can you escape the condemnation which follows from such darkness! Prophets and wise men are sent to you, and, instead of receiving them, you persecute them as your fathers did, and you are as guilty in your day as they were in theirs." It was the last occasion on which he could ever venture to address the people from the Temple colonnades.

To the soul of Jesus, this mental slavery was simply intolerable. "Oh, Jerusalem!" he exclaimed, "which killest the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." And he foretold the length of time which must elapse before the Jews would acknowledge and understand him. The "return to Palestine" will be their realisation of the true work and nature of their last great seer. Of the temple at Jerusalem, the costly work of Herod the Great, which was not yet completed, after many years of labour, he observed to his companions that "not one stone should be left upon another," and the prophecy has long ago been literally fulfilled. It was symbolical of the mission of Christ in the world, in substituting the divine temple of humanity for the external buildings of the churches.

The allegories of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver,

the prodigal son, the steward in debt, all turned upon the truth of the result of accepting the light that is sent to us. It is like the finding of a lost sheep, of a piece of silver, of the return of the evil-doer, of the blotting out of a debt. The sinner is often more free in mind than the self-righteous person; the despised beggar better able to enter a sphere of rest than the rich man — rich in the reputation and wealth of earth, but poor in the riches of the spirit. And between that higher and lower sphere, a gulf was fixed, by the very nature of the spirit, and those engrossed with the material, who could neither understand nor receive the true light of the past, would be equally blind even to a revelation from the spirits of those who lived in the liberty and light of another world.

To the question of the Pharisees, as to when this kingdom, of which he so often spoke, should come, he answered with an eternal inspiration: "The kingdom of God cometh *not* with observation; neither shall they say, lo here; or, lo there, for THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU!" A truth, in itself, enough to revolutionise every religion on this globe. What are these external religions worth, compared with the interior development of man? How is it accomplished? Through the victory of the spiritual. And what is the result? Liberty. Oh, beautiful and divine idea — the "liberty of the sons of God," — this world hath known but one who truly welcomed thee, who embodied thee in every fibre of his being — the misunderstood, crucified, and then deified Man of Nazareth!

Ever did he strive to lift up the minds of those around him from the external to the spiritual, and how vainly, we know. And some of his utterances, like the one above, were a whole age beyond the time in which he lived. "Your thoughts and deeds," he said, "are written upon the spirit. There is the secret of immortality. There comes the real result of all you do. Creeds are nothing; temples are nothing; great professions are nothing; the inner life is all in all." He seized on

every incident to unfold this fact ; the spirit of an action was its real worth ; the widow with the mites, which were her all, had given more to the treasury than the rich men ; and the servant who had the courage and the faith to increase what had been placed in his charge, and did not fold it up and hide it in the misuse of veneration for the original gift, would receive his reward.

During this last visit to Jerusalem, Christ often returned to the Mount of Olives, and there it was that he held many private conversations with his loved companions, and spoke many things with regard to the great future hard for them to understand. He told them, with prophetic vision, of the great war which would take place in Palestine ; of those who would arise and falsely declare that they represented himself and his return ; of their own sufferings, and of the result to those who were able to endure them. They would win their immortality,—“souls,” or lives. The gospel of the kingdom would be preached to the whole world, as a revelation to all nations, and not until then would the end come. The century of steam has fulfilled it, and the end, the only end, is the triumph of the truth, the close of the long struggle in the re-manifestation of all that is represented in Christ.

Of the invasion of the Roman army he spoke in the plainest terms, and of the straits to which the unfortunate inhabitants would be reduced. But the time for his re-appearance would not then be ripe. When it did come, it would take place unexpectedly. In figurative language he showed how the old revelation would wane in the light of the new ; and how, at some far-off time, his true glory would be manifested, and his close presence among men made known by angel-power. Those on earth, chosen by angelic spirits, would be gathered together, even when most remote from each other, and would aid in unfolding the glory of the New Dispensation. The time of his return, according to human expectations, would be known to none ; it was not known even to himself ; but many would be called into

the work of the kingdom; one would be taken, and another left. All should prepare for it since the hour of the new dawn would be an hour of judgment. Some would be as goats; some as sheep; the history of the past would arise and be seen in a true light, and endorse or overthrow the institutions of men. His re-manifestation would not take place in an age of true belief. "When the Son of Man cometh shall he find the real faith on earth?" Would it not be almost killed by every kind of materialism, and, at last, would not he be considered even a myth? And in the powerful words in which he spoke of being received by some and rejected by others, he foresaw the struggle of his own spirit, ever alive amid the turmoil of human life, and ever inspiring some receptive minds with the true ideas of the system which has arrayed itself against so-called "heresy." Christ has been with the martyrs, no matter what their belief, — and with them he has been as it were in the dungeon, and on the scaffold, and in the awful market-place where the spirits of inspired men and women, condemned by the church, ascended to God in flame. They followed in his footsteps, they trod the narrow path which leads to life, and wore the crown of thorns which was given them by Christ. Their cries would reach, and have reached, to heaven, for they were chosen. Once more he speaks to their persecutors, be they past or present, and says, in language about which there can be no mistake: "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the *least* of these, ye did it not unto *me*!"

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND'S TREACHERY.

THESE foreshadowings of a victory to come must have fallen pleasantly on the ears of those tried followers of Jesus, although they were anxious and troubled about many things.

His angelic guides had chosen the time of the Jewish passover for his martyrdom, as a lasting symbol of sacrifice for the people and deliverance. It was very near, and calling their attention to the fateful present, Jesus said, — "You know that after the feast of the passover, I shall be delivered up to be crucified." In fact, the matter had been already settled at a special meeting of the Sanhedrin, presided over by Caiaphas, the high-priest. Even the disaffected and semi-Roman Herodians agreed with them. During the feast nothing could be done owing to the present attitude of the people, but immediately it was over they decided to secretly arrest him. To accomplish this, it was necessary to obtain the aid of one who knew his movements and places of retirement, when he was away from the crowd. Judas, who was well-known to them, and from whose mind all scruples had been removed by the influences thrown upon it, had a private conference with them, and pledged himself to aid them. He agreed to betray his place of rest at night for a certain sum in payment, and for this he was to be on the watch for a "convenient" opportunity to deliver Jesus to the officers, who had their special instructions.

Thus is the Christ-spirit of Truth ever betrayed for the worthless possessions of earth! Thus do greed and selfishness conspire against the heavenly mission!

Surrounded as he was by persons who hated the very sight of the innocent one, and who mocked at and discredited his work, the eyes of Judas were closed to the gulf before him. Where hast thou dwelt, O spirit of unhappy birth? Have *men* forgiven thee so speedily as the one thou didst betray?

The little celebration of the passover which Jesus held with his chosen companions was very informal in character, but he observed the custom, because his own work fulfilled the symbol of the ancient usage. The repast of the lamb and bitter herbs, and bread and wine, was like a voice calling to him out of the dead past. Moreover, he desired to draw them around him in a final quiet gathering, which would bring something to aid and sustain each one in sympathy with him. The directions he gave to the two who hired the room showed, as was so often the case, his clairvoyant gift, and a chamber was hired just as he foretold.

As they sat together, Jesus made his second allusion to the condition he saw around Judas, of whose treachery he had long been aware. "One of them would betray him, one of the chosen twelve; one who ate of the same bread!" It was the dark shadow which hovered around that little table. Naturally, he was questioned as to who that person would be, and he veiled the reply, so that the sign of which he spoke was given a little while after unnoticed. Better indeed for that man had it almost been that he should not have been born to enter on his immortality of shame, although his cruelty was overruled for the highest ends! Alluding to the memorial nature of the festival, he said: "This wine is my blood, — which is shed for the truth. This bread is my body, which is sacrificed! When you celebrate this feast do it no more as a mere ceremony, but in remembrance of *me*." His companions were Jews, adherents of Jewish observances, and followers of the Levitical law, and this spiritual significance in what had become a dead rite, was full of the same liberty of thought, and growth towards light which characterised

all that Jesus said and did. Could he have foreseen at that hour the wretched idolatry which, centuries later would create what is called the "Mass," and the ignorant and miserable disputes on "transubstantiation" and the "real presence," it is not too much to say that Christ would have swept the meal, as he swept the money-changers and vendors of doves in the temple-court, into the streets! Even he, conscious as he was of the terrible results of religious materialism and slavery, could not foresee all the details of "pious" human folly.

None suspected Judas, and when he arose to leave the table, indifferent alike to the words of Jesus, his noble mission, and his own pitiless resolve, he hardly heeded the brief sentence which fell upon his ears: "What you do—do quickly!"

After his departure, an atmosphere of peace stole upon them notwithstanding the heavy cloud which hung over the head of the Master. He knew that the time had come for him to return "to the Father," and his final words were full of noble advice. "Love each other;" he said. "It is the new commandment. Victory, notwithstanding all, awaits me. You cannot follow me now, but I shall meet you again and receive you in a world which has 'many mansions.' You know how to attain that life. Follow me. I am the way, and the truth, and the life!"

"My words," he added, in answer to the questionings of Thomas, "are inspired; the divine power breathes in me, and the spirit of Truth, so difficult to receive, shall go forth into the world. I shall often be present with you, and manifest myself to you. Many truths shall be taught to you, and recalled to your remembrance. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; a happiness, not of earth, but of calmness and strength of soul, as of those in heaven."

He compared himself to a living vine, out of which branches would grow, bearing much fruit. Love

would hold them together in a coming work, and love had inspired him to lay down his life for the people. They might be hated and persecuted in the world as he had been, for he had indeed been hated without a cause, but truth would conquer.

"Be strong," said he earnestly, "for they will excommunicate you from the church, and even think they will do God service by killing you, but they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me! I warn you of the warfare which will be waged against the truth, yet it is best that I should leave you, for it will prevail in the end, and teach all men the real nature of sin, of morality, of a true judgment. When the Spirit comes it will speak truly concerning me. Greater things than I have done shall be accomplished in the future, and although you may weep while the world smiles, your sorrow shall be turned into joy. The truth will be born through anguish, but it will live. You will see me again, and your happiness will be wrested from you by none."

He also alluded to his incarnation, and pre-existence. "I came from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." His friends acknowledged their belief that he had been sent to earth to give it light. To this Jesus answered, "Yet the hour is approaching when you will all leave me; and I shall be alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

That his loved and trusted friends who listened to him, believed even at this eleventh hour that some immediate and palpable honours awaited both him and them is clear, notwithstanding all that was told them. They even speculated as to which should be honoured the most. "Kings of earth," said Jesus, "love authority. *Seek it not!* You have been firm with me in my trials of faith. Your victory is *spiritual*. In the kingdom of the future, the rest awaits you, and the honour." And they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives, for their last walk together, and their

last rest. On their way Jesus truly said, "I shall be a deep trouble to you, although I shall arise again, and will meet you in Galilee." In Galilee, the alien province, and the scene of his earliest labours. "The powers of darkness have sought to sift you; and for you, Peter, I have prayed that your faith may not fail." Strong in his conviction that nothing should move him, the devoted man exclaimed, "With thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" But the prophetic vision of Christ could not be deceived. He simply observed: "This very night, before the cock crows in the dawn, you will even deny three times that you know me!" Nor did the renewed assertion of Peter, and the impassioned rejoinder of them all efface the vision of that desertion and denial from his eyes.

"I shall be classed with criminals," he said, and when they sought to manifest their fidelity by showing him the swords they had purchased to protect him, he could only close the subject by saying "Enough!" Neither swords nor friends could avail in the ordeal before him.

His final prayer, so far as it has been given, was very beautiful, and in itself an address to them, and an appeal to the angels for their protection. "I pray for them," said he. "May they attain the eternal life. I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do, and while I was with them I guarded them, and none have failed but the son of perdition. I ask not that they should be taken from the world, but that they should be preserved from evil powers. They are not of it, even as I am not of it. And I pray for those to come who will follow in their footsteps, and accept the truth from them. In the far-off ages, I was chosen, and the world knew Thee not, but I knew Thee, and have made Thee known to these. Keep them in safety, and surround them with Thy love evermore!"

It was late in the evening, and he already felt the terrible influence of the wave of opposition which was sent forth from the adjacent city. To the spiritual man,

love and sympathy or hatred and anger, are like life or death. Already, the sorely-tried, yet strong and unmoved reformer, felt the first pangs of death in the very air around him. There was no longer any rest in the familiar retreat to which they had passed, the pleasant garden of Gethsemane. That spirit which was the opposite of his own was let loose upon him, and he entered into its hell, and tasted the secret of the miseries of men. Those who have realised this will know that nothing but the blindest ignorance could ever connect the thought of fear with the actions of the man who was inspired with courage from his first breath to his last. His very nature made him feel with the sensitiveness of the spirit; his very strength was drawn from a condition of being in the strongest contrast to those around him.

In an agony of mind such as those alone can feel who have given up everything that the world holds dear in faith upon an unseen power of heaven, which seems for a while to have been withdrawn, the Nazarene called around him one or two of his companions, and exclaimed to them: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, — *even unto death!*" He suffered most at this time, he felt most keenly, and he realised most fully the depths of the darkness, and at last he fell on his knees and prayed. "Oh! if this cup might pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!"

Every martyr has uttered these words in his inmost soul. The truth — the beloved cause — the sacred mission, which is the light of all, — oh! must it pass through an eclipse like this!

His friends, from whom vital strength was drawn in this hour of extremity, were exhausted even to sleep. But for their presence, Jesus could not have remained longer in visible form, and the great result of his sufferings would have lacked the desired publicity.

"Watch and pray!" said he, walking backwards and forwards, and, looking upon them again and again, "Oh! could you not watch with me one

hour?" An angel-presence drew near, and manifested himself clearly to him, in answer to his prayers, as he knelt upon the ground. But before the man of sorrows arose to his feet, the blood-drops stood upon his brow. The conflict in its last stage was in his own being,—the conflict of spirit with matter,—and the material reeled with the strife. The process of sublimation had begun.

At last he saw the gleam of distant lights, and knew the officers of the Sanhedrin and Roman soldiers were at hand with the relentless Judas. He roused the worn-out sleepers with the words, "Let us go forward. My betrayer is at hand."

The salutation of welcome Judas had previously arranged with the officers should be the sign of the identity of Jesus, and, without a shadow of shame, and fortified by influences from a thousand centres in and out of the form, he approached the Master with a respectful bearing and gave him a kiss. This action surprised even Christ. To betray in a moment of apparent welcome! But the interests of ecclesiasticism know no scruples, and no honour. He passed Judas with silent contempt, and faced the armed band himself. "Whom do you seek?" he asked. They replied, in the dim light, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I am he." Amazed at his quiet courage, and uncertain of the fact stated, they recoiled for a moment. Jesus at once repeated that he was the man, and with an affection which ever sought to sacrifice himself for others, he appealed to them, if they wanted him, to let his companions go. It was then that Peter drew his sword, and inflicted a wound on a servant of the high-priest. The record states that Jesus requested the guard to remain passive for a moment, and at once healed it. It was a sublime act of practical forgiveness of his enemies, and would have touched any hearts save those steeled by the feelings of anger and scorn. Common minds are wont to look upon the refusal to respond to persecution, with contempt. They like to see a man give a straight blow to

an act of cruelty or treachery. Their sympathies would have been with Peter. But Jesus remembered a noble cause. "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The sole question he asked any of them was, "why they sought to arrest him as if he had been a common thief, since he had been openly among them for so long?" A voice whispered in his ear, "It was not permitted!" and he added, "But this is your hour, and the hour of the powers of darkness."

And then his vision was realised. All his companions, with the exception of Peter, and another whose name is not given, saw him arrested, and fled at once for their own safety. And even Peter followed at a long distance.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORLD'S SENTENCE.

THE Roman guard took Jesus first before Annas, or Hanan, and within the walls of the palace at Jerusalem he was subjected to the first semi-judicial inquiry.

He was questioned by the high-priest more with the object of eliciting something which would condemn him, than with any desire of obtaining information or affording him an opportunity of obtaining justice. Christ at once saw that truth and justice were the last things which would be cared for, and he answered with his unflinching firmness, "I have acted openly. I have taught in synagogues and in the temple, the resorts of the Jews; and I have made no secret of my principles. Why do you question me! Question my audiences, for they have long been familiar with my teachings."

He was instantly struck by one of the priest's officers for insolence. Courage is always "insolence" or "impertinence," when it is in the way of other interests, and a life-time of heroism on the part of the heretic is only looked upon by those pledged to the past as a self-willed fanaticism. Jesus bore the insult very calmly. "What harm have I done?" he asked. The practical answer was to send him, as one guilty of crimes, for a second examination before Caiaphas, who was the formally-appointed high-priest, and a sharer of the authority of Annas, who had only been deposed by Roman decree. A different course was pursued in this court, and the evidence of others was demanded in proof of his guilt. False witnesses were sought. No doubt, however, the priests were only too ready to believe

their evidence to be perfectly correct and reliable. The poet has said, "A lie that is half a truth, is ever the worst of lies," and the statements of these persons contained a mixture of truth and falsehood, which, at the time, was sure to do its work. Jesus was well known to have spoken of his power to restore the "destroyed temple," the temple of his body, and he had endeavoured to teach the people the real nature of that holiest of structures. It was easy to pervert such words. One witness stated that he had said "*he* could destroy the temple of God, and build it again in three days;" the other, "*I will* destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands."

What he did say was, that, "*If* the temple were destroyed he could restore it again." Nor did he for a moment mean the church made with the hands of men. How could he explain such a truth there? It would have been casting pearls before swine. The evidence made him appear as a teacher of folly, self-assertion, and falsehood; but all the eloquence of Greece or Rome would have availed nothing in an atmosphere like that. He felt it, and was silent. Caiaphas, who was more imperious than Annas, and would have scouted the bare idea of the true interpretation of the testimony, at once expressed his opinion: "You are unable to answer. What can you say to such evidence?" Jesus still remained silent.

"Will you dare to tell us," exclaimed the chief representative of religion in Palestine's greatest city, "that *you* are the expected Messiah?"

"*I am*," at last replied the weary prisoner. "The time will come when my power will be made known on earth, and I shall be recognised in heaven."

This was enough. It was the truth, — but a truth hated with all the intensity that ecclesiasticism could pour upon it. Caiaphas rent his robe in ignorant horror, and angrily remarked, "He has been guilty

of blasphemy. There is no need for any further evidence, for he has condemned himself." And, turning to the priests and scribes who were present, he asked what their decision was. They all replied that he deserved the punishment of death. So indignant were the officials present that they insulted Jesus, and sought every means in their power to humiliate him. They blindfolded him, and requested to know whether he could give them a proof of his power of vision in stating who his assailants were. "Who is it who struck you!" And they spat on his weary form. If humiliation marks the pathway of heaven's reformers, — and alas! we know it does, — then the Man of Nazareth received the *last seal of his mission* in that wretched chamber of accusation.

The sitting broke up, and he was left in charge of a guard for several hours.

Meanwhile, one of the saddest events in that time of anguish had been taking place. Peter, who had followed his persecuted Teacher to the precincts of the palace, and who was in deep anxiety to know the result of the examinations, was scornfully accused of being one of his adherents by an attendant, in all probability a portress.

"Why — you are one of the man's followers!" she exclaimed. As she spoke before several officers and persons belonging to the palace, every eye was fixed upon him. Fear and annoyance overcame Peter, before he had time to reflect upon his cowardice, and he angrily denied it. One of the servants asked him whether he had not seen him in the garden of Gethsemane, with the Nazarene. This Peter again denied. Some incredulously rejoined that his accent showed he was a Galilean, and the anger of the man who had promised he would follow Christ to prison and to death, found vent in oaths. The night was far advanced, and the pale streaks of dawn were on the horizon. A cock, awakened by the growing light from its slumber, had crowed twice. At the very moment when Peter

denied for the third time all knowledge of Jesus, the angels who were looking down upon the scene, and who were aware of every incident that transpired, decreed that the forsaken and deserted Man should be led through the hall on his way to a guarded room. The cock gave its third familiar cry, and as it smote upon Peter's ear, Jesus gave him a single look. And the tried and weak companion of his labours of the past, left the hall in an agony of self-reproach and grief, and stood alone in the chill twilight shedding bitter tears.

It was the last drop in the cup of suffering which Jesus of Nazareth drank. He had been attracted to this companion by the strength and warmth of his nature; his powerful magnetism was a rest to him, and a source of strength, and his sympathy, so far as he really understood it, with a mission so radical in its nature and so difficult to carry out, was an ever-present comfort. He recognised a strong spirit, and gave to him a willing tribute of affection. When Andrew had brought his brother to him in the first opening days of his reformatory work, Jesus had said, "Your name is Simon, the son of Jonas, the dove, but I shall call you Kephas (or Peter), the rock in which the dove may shelter." And when others were speculating as to who Jesus was, and whether he was the reincarnation of the spirit of one of the great prophets, Peter had recognised at the time that he represented a more divine principle, and a greater work, than any of the prophets of the past. The truth had shown itself to him then through spiritual power. Jesus again called him a rock, and in the enthusiasm of a more perfect recognition of his work than he had received from any other person, except John, he said that through him, he would form a lasting society, "against which the powers of darkness should not prevail, and which should be a key to the kingdom of heaven."¹ There is

¹ The word *Peter* is also derived from the ancient mysteries, and signified the office of opener, discloser, or interpreter; (PTR); the unchangeable truth,

not the remotest connection with this society, the true church of the Spirit, of the martyrs and reformers, and the ecclesiastical organisation formed at Rome. There has never been any certain evidence that Peter ever was at Rome; but if he had been, it would not have been of the faintest consequence. The great missionary of the work of Christ was Paul, who wrested it from Judaism, and gave it to the Gentiles, and but for Paul, the truth would have flickered for a while in Palestine and perished. It is incredible that any one can read the glorious inspiration of Paul on immortality, and not perceive that he was called forth by Christ to rescue his work from oblivion; that he soared nearer to its true height than any other masculine mind, and that he literally bore it on his heart and kept it alive. When Jesus met Peter once more, he addressed him with a love and forgiveness which was a part of his beautiful soul, but it was never again as Peter, but as "Simon, son of Jonas," the old name of the old days.

As for the great ecclesiastical society which has arisen from the ruins of the old Pagan city of eloquence and warrior-zeal, there has really been nothing in common with its system and the grand conception of Liberty set forth in Christ. It may have accomplished certain good work; it may have been an essential outgrowth of the materialism of the people; but it has been a fearful obstacle to human progress in its highest form, and weighed in the divine balance of the Light that shone in Palestine, it has been "found wanting" through the centuries which have come and gone. It has been founded on unspiritual tradition and chimera; it has been a pyramid reversed, a point supporting an ever-increasing weight of creeds and forms; a house built on sand.

We turn again to the last scenes of martyrdom in the

the true temple, or church of the rock, (Petra); the immovable pole-star of the astral system. This deeper significance could never have been attached to the individual Peter, but to the truth he, or any other was called upon to proclaim; to the immortal inner life of the work one day to be represented in the expanding soul-life of humanity, subject to divine and immutable laws.

life of the Nazarene, himself the victim of an unenlightened church and priests. All earthly ties had been broken in the humiliation to which a loved companion, keen for the interest of the moment, and blind to a mighty future, had subjected him. He was left to the angels, and oh! thank God, a thousand times, they never desert their faithful workers! He was appointed to "tread the wine-press alone," but their rays of light, flaming with an unseen glory, fell upon his head as he sat in silence within the Jewish guard-room, to await the end.

The next step was to secure the entire vote of condemnation from the Sanhedrin. In the early morning Jesus was conducted before it and again examined.

"In what way do you claim to be considered the Messiah?" He replied that nothing he could say would induce them to believe it, but that he should be recognised in the future as a power from God.

"Do you mean to say *you* are the son of God?" Truly did Jesus announce that "he was,"—the most perfect expression indeed of the divine life in humanity this world has ever seen.

It was decisive. The Sanhedrin, like Caiaphas, immediately condemned him, as having himself furnished a conclusive proof of blasphemy which rendered all witnesses needless. He was a heretic of the worst type, and, like thousands who followed him in the coming struggle in Europe, was to be delivered to the "secular arm" for punishment. The priests would take care that he should die. Indeed, the common thought in Jerusalem was *how to get rid of him*. To accomplish the desired end, it would be necessary to produce the charge of sedition against him. And since Messiahship involved the idea of monarchy among the Jews, his assertion did not render it difficult to establish it. The Romans had been very severe on the occasion of several outbreaks among those Jews who were called "zealots," and Pontius Pilatus, the successor of Valerius Gratus, was known to be a strict and stern

governor, who had very little patience with any species of fanaticism. He was present in the city at this very time in order to quell any disturbance which might arise on the day of the feast, and had been appointed one of the procurators of Judæa after the deposition of Archelaus.

Jesus was already condemned, and it was simply for the purpose of obtaining legal sanction for his execution that he was taken for a last examination before the Procurator.

Before the singular yet typical scene which took place in the Prætorium is dwelt upon, we may turn for a few moments to the unhappy Judas. He had succeeded; the earth-bound spirits who had inspired him and deceived him, were rejoicing; and, for a brief period, he had fancied he had been the means of freeing the world from a danger and a trouble. But before he had time to enjoy one item of the treasure he had secured, the sudden lightning-stroke of angel-power smote him, and revealed the truth. He had been the means—so it seemed to him—of condemning and destroying a god-like mission; and he returned to the priests, over whom he had now no longer any influence, to cast the miserable result he had coveted at their feet. “Oh! it is true! I have betrayed the innocent blood!” Too late! He was simply the tool of an influence he could not realise; and the priests, with whom he had had so many private conferences, contemptuously disregarded him. “If *he* thought that the man was innocent, that was his own affair; as far as they were concerned their opinion was fixed; it was nothing to them.”

It was the first strange testimony to the innocence of the Nazarene, and it came whence it was least expected. The moment of horror on understanding his real position in the work came over him with such deadly force that life was unbearable. He fled, as men sometimes do fly, in hours of awful trial, by his own hand to the unseen world. Pray for the spirit of Judas, and trouble him no more, oh! mortals of earth! Has he not suf-

fered—has he not been cursed enough? He has been driven from every home and every haunt of men, by their feeling of scorn; his name has been a common by-word; he has been crucified for centuries; he awaits deliverance at the hands of the one who prayed that *all* might be forgiven. In your prayers, forget not those who err, for the light of truth is born even for them!

Pray for Judas, ye reformers, who are lit with the dawn of a new day! Pray for the churches! Pray for the weak who persecute you! Even for the sake of these do ye suffer, and shed your heart's blood. Slowly grows the tender spirit of man. The pathway is too narrow, the mountain-height too steep for all to climb. You, who have been in the broad road once yourselves, and have at last found the Way, pray for those who know it not,—yes! pioneers and reformers, forgive and pray!

Before Pilate had spoken his final words the spirit of Judas stood and looked upon the human embodiment of Immortality. He saw the light falling upon the devoted head; he saw the heralds of a heavenly sphere who were clustered like stars above the stormy sea of strife; already he beheld them literally and truly descending upon the Son of Man, who felt their presence; he saw as forms of shadowy grey the outlines of the scribes and of the priests; he saw the myriad "spirits in prison" of men like these in eager work against the Power above; and he looked upon the Messengers of Light and cried, but between him and them there was a great gulf fixed; by an iron law he was withheld from passing to them, or they to him; he was in the hell of his own darkness, and the fire of his own remorse; and alone, for he saw what the spirits of earth did not, nor could he reach them by a single sign. If suffering may purge the spirit, think you not that long since "the lost one" of the little flock has "been found," purified at last, and brought nigh to the radiant circle of the chosen twelve? The love of God was a flame in the breast of the Man of Nazareth; and in the supreme hour of his

conflict he had no feeling but that of pity for the "wandering sheep."

If anyone desires to obtain a powerful and, indeed, inspired conception of the Roman procurator of Judæa, and the scene around him in the court of the Prætorium, he should stand for a little while before Muncackzsky's powerful picture of "Christ before Pilate." Although the head and face of the arraigned Man is a complete failure and wholly unlike the features, and the expansive brow, and the penetrating eyes, of a person whose organisation represented the spiritual forces in perfection, the delineation of Pilate answers in all respects not only to a typical Roman, but to the individual who sentenced Jesus to death. He was a man of the world, and had about as much sympathy with the Jewish religion and the Jews and their Messianic hopes, as a materialist of the present day would give to the Trinitarian churches. The first thing that annoyed him was the inconveniently early appeal made to him by the Jews to avoid ceremonial pollution on the day of the passover; for, against all their intentions, Jesus was designed to be martyred by the guiding powers on that very day. The governor had to go outside to meet the mob, and said, very briefly: "Of what do you accuse this man?" They evasively replied that he was a criminal or they should not have brought him there. "If he is," observed the Roman, who shrewdly suspected that some religious question was involved, "you had better judge him according to your own law."

They replied that they had no power to sentence to death, and, in order to excite Pilate's sympathy with them, they declared it was a case of treason against the Roman government. The half-told truths were again mingled with falsehood, and the ecclesiastic interests, — the secret cause of it all, — were conveniently dropped. Jesus was accused and opposed for *other reasons*. "He is perverting the nation, and forbidding the payment of tribute, and has called himself a king."

The governor regarded the accused and accusers alike with contempt, and re-entering the court, (pavement as it was called), he took his seat in the judicial chair of state, and directed that Jesus should be brought before him.

"Are *you* the 'King of the Jews?'" he asked of the captive man, whose response he hardly deigned to notice.

"Do you ask for your own information, or because others have told you this?" was the answering question of Jesus.

"Am *I* a Jew?" returned Pilate, very shortly. "Your own fellow-countrymen and the chief priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?"

Then the Man who had never for an instant thought of self, and whose one great mission had been to unfold the kingdom of God on earth, said, "My kingdom is not of this world. I have no earthly weapons. It is a *spiritual* kingdom."

By a legally-trained mind like Pilate's, this sublime answer was hardly comprehended.

"Do you call yourself a king, or not?" he asked.

"I do," said Jesus; "that is, I fulfil the prophecies of the Messiah. I was born to bear witness to a great truth. Those who understand me, listen to me."

"What is truth?" remarked the governor with philosophical brevity. To him the hapless prisoner was an innocent visionary, on whom it was hardly worth while to waste time. He was shrewd enough to see at once that his crimes existed in the heated imagination of Jewish fanaticism.

Rising from the magisterial seat, and going outside, he told the crowd of Jews that there was "no harm in the man." "I find no fault in him," said he, "at all."

The priests at once renewed their accusations. "He has stirred up the people all over Judæa, and also in Galilee, and even in this city."

Pilate turned to Jesus and said, "You see that many

charges are brought against you. What have you to say?"

Jesus remained silent. It was useless to attempt to repeat such inspirations as his before a mob which was breathing out its fierce hatred upon him, and he stood in the presence of them all without uttering a syllable. No words could make known what he realised. The governor was not a little surprised, and felt unable to account for a very strange absence of self-defence. If he were an innocent person, why did he not give an "honest answer?" He asked if he were a Galilean, and, on finding that such was the case, sent the almost worn-out man to Herod Antipas, under whose jurisdiction Galilee remained.

The tetrarch was pleased, as he had long wished to see one who had been talked of as a notorious prophet, who did and said many extraordinary things, and he commenced to question Jesus in a common spirit of curiosity. His questions did not obtain a single reply, for not only was Jesus extremely exhausted by the scenes through which he had passed during the space of several hours, but he recoiled from the presence of a man whose life was a disgrace to the nation. It ended in Herod's treating him with ridicule, and with characteristic love of a brutal jest, he sent back the prisoner to Pilate, dressed in costly robes. The very jest, however, showed that Herod considered the "crimes" of Jesus worthy of no serious consideration.

The Roman governor had now to deal with what was a very difficult problem, — how to rescue a harmless fanatic from the murderous designs of the Jews without causing a commotion. Calling the Jewish authorities together in a brief council, he said: "You brought this man to me as one who is doing serious mischief among the people; I see no evidence whatever to support the idea, nor does Herod, or, as you may suppose, he would not have been likely to send him back again. Certainly, he has done nothing de-

serving execution. I shall therefore sentence him to receive so many lashes and let him go."

This was the conclusion at which his Roman common-sense had arrived. The suggestion at once raised a howl of indignation. It was the custom at the time of the great Jewish feast to release and pardon any prisoner selected by the voice of the people. Among the well-known criminals of the time was a lawless robber called Barrabas, who had committed a murder in a riot in the city. Pilate's suggestion that Jesus should be released was immediately met by a loud counter-cry for Barrabas. The governor was extremely unwilling to listen to it, and, while weighing the subject over in his own mind, his wife sent a singular message to him about a strange dream, like a vision, she had experienced concerning the prisoner who was arraigned before him. With a woman's keen intuition she sensed something to which her husband's mind was closed.

"Refuse," she said, "to mix yourself up in any accusation against this man. He is innocent; and I have had a strong impression about his case owing to a dream, which has caused me much suffering."

Gladly would Pilate have followed her humane advice. But the powers of darkness were permitted to prevail. The priests began to incite the crowd to demand the release of Barrabas.

"Which shall I do?" at last asked the much-tried governor.

"Release Barrabas!" was the cry. Pilate, who saw through the conspiracy, said:

"And what must I do with the one you call 'The king of the Jews?'"

"Crucify him!" came the renewed shout of the misled and merciless crowd.

"Why, — what real harm has the man done?" asked Pilate with impatience.

The only reply was in the renewed demand for the speedy death of the defenceless Nazarene. Annoyed

with the rage of the mob, which was only increased by his opposition, he gave at last the required sentence. Jesus was to be scourged and crucified.

Then he washed his hands in water, and declared that he would not be responsible for the shedding of innocent blood.

"*We* will accept that responsibility," rejoined many voices.

The robber and murderer was released, and the Nazarene was held captive for the immediate execution of a barbarous and frightful sentence.

The physical martyrdom of Jesus commenced with a scourging. The soldiers treated him with every insult they could conceive. They plaited a crown of thorny brambles, such as may be seen growing now in the wayside in Palestine, and placed it on his head, thrust a reed in his hand for a sceptre, clothed him in a robe of purple cloth, and tendered him a mock homage. Even as in the far-off future, in France, and in Italy, and Spain, might have been seen the "condemned of holy mother Church" — some of the noblest of our race — attired also in the gaudy yellow robe and crowned with the pasteboard cap on which the wisdom of the Inquisition had figured demons, and standing chained to the stake surrounded by cruel monks bearing — oh! mockery of mockeries! — the crucifix and gospels!

After the scourging, Pilate, who was vexed at the whole affair, evidently considered he had suffered enough, and, leading him forth once more said: "I have brought him out, but I find him guiltless of any crime!" This was the second strange testimony to his innocence, also given whence it might have been least expected.

Poor hapless suffering one! standing before the murderous mob which so-called religion had incited against thee, — thy cup was full! Disbelieved, persecuted, betrayed, deserted, denied, ridiculed, exchanged for the

redemption of a thief and a slayer of his kind, thou didst face all that wrong and cruelty could commit against thee. There is no mercy for the heretic.

"Behold the man," said the governor. Little did he dream how his words would live. "Take him yourselves, and crucify him," said he, "for I find no fault in him."

The priests, secure of triumph at last, ventured to observe that he had violated their law against blasphemy. The words they uttered smote strangely on Pilate's ear. He believed in the innocence of Jesus. What if he should be indeed a heaven-sent man? "Who and what are you?" he asked of Jesus as he retired into the palace with him for a few moments.

The thorn-crowned man answered not. He was beyond the reach of any further human appeal, or human injustice. Words were useless, for he knew his fate was sealed.

"I am able either to release you or commit you to death," said the troubled Roman with impatience. "Why do you not answer me?"

Jesus truly told him he had no power at all unless it was permitted "from above." "Therefore," said he, "those who have betrayed me to you have sinned more than you."

In vain Pilate made a last effort to free him. The priests told the procurator that he could not be a friend of Cæsar if he did so. "We have no king but Cæsar." A singular admission for Jews! But anything was preferable to the release of this heretical reformer. There was no choice. Pilate led out his prisoner, for the last time, and pointing to him with a mingled feeling of haunting doubt, and a desire to get rid of the whole affair, exclaimed — "There — behold your king!"

"Away with him!" screamed priests and people. "Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" asked Pilate with a conviction that the idea that this strange Galilean peasant should ever become a monarch, was

the most absurd of accusations, and a mere pretext for compassing his death. "Shall I crucify a man like this?"

His voice was drowned with cries of "Cæsar," and in a few moments more the purple robe was torn from the form of Jesus, and he was dragged away by the soldiers to the place devoted to the execution of common criminals

Where, in these hours of trial, was Jairus? Where was the blind man, who at least once had the courage to say, "Whether this man be a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see?" Where was the healed servant of the Roman centurion? And where was the restored young man who was the "only son of his mother," at Nain? Why was not their evidence heard, and the innocence of these works of mercy proved?

They were just where the crowd always is when there is a loud cry of evil-doing raised against one person, in the *back-ground*. Have the people ever had the courage to rescue the martyr to a strong prejudice, and to insist upon justice? No. And although some gave the unfortunate prophet of Galilee strong sympathy, especially the women, it was in silence, and the evil tongues of the disaffected had finished the active work of the religious zealots. Not one asked for his own version of his life and mission. Not one said — "Let him be quietly heard!" Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, Hillel, Gamaliel, the superior representatives of the Jewish faith, were all silent. If silence gives consent, all gave consent in some form to the death of the Man of Nazareth. The story has been repeated over and over again in the history of human experience. None wish to openly associate themselves with us when we are under the cloud of false accusation. And earthly "reputation," that miserable apology for cruelties of every kind, is more prized than a work which will unbar the very gates of Paradise.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIEST'S TRIUMPH.

THE condemned man was too weak to bear his instrument of torture to its appointed place, and it was given to a stranger. Jerusalem was filled with vast numbers from the surrounding country who had come to celebrate the feast, and the recent events had made a great stir.

A crowd followed the soldiers and their prisoners, for fate had decreed that the crucifixion of Jesus should take place with that of two other men,—two thieves. His death-like pallor, and trembling limbs excited the deep compassion of the Galilean women who were present. His broad and noble brow was scarred with thorns, and it seemed as if the outer form had hardly strength to longer hold the spirit. Tears came in the eyes of some, and rolled down their cheeks. He was still young, and in woman there is the heart of the mother. Fixing his eyes on them the Nazarene said with the old power of prophecy that was so strong in him—"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves, and for your city! For in the coming days it will be counted a joy to be childless!"

Within an hour, the last work was done, and on a low bleak hill outside the walls, and between the two malefactors, he was nailed to his cross. Over his head on a conspicuous tablet was written in three languages, the strange words "*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*" It had been done by Pilate's hand, and his hand had been led, though he knew it not, by an unseen guide. All read it, for all knew one of those languages, and it speedily reached the ears of the authorities of the

Sanhedrin. They at once requested an immediate alteration, an insertion of the words, "*he said,*" but the governor, who in his heart, was not sorry to have been the cause of a little annoyance to persons who seemed to him to love persecution, refused to accede to the request.

Racked with the pangs of mortal agony as Jesus was, there were many who did not scruple to add to his mental anguish. He was insulted by the soldiers, and many of the Jews, and the words he had uttered were recalled with derision.

"You who can destroy and rebuild the temple in three days—save yourself!"

Even some of the chief priests, not satisfied with the accomplishment of their desires, came to look upon him, and contemptuously observed—"He was ready enough to 'save others,' but he is helpless with regard to himself. If he is the 'King of Israel,' let him come down from the cross, and *then* we will believe in him. If he is a son of God, let God deliver him now."

It was the blasphemy of scepticism, always uttered by materialists, whether they belong to the science of the hour, or religion. The sun of the truth must shine in *their* way, or they will not believe. Of what use would be a belief thrust upon souls who cannot grow towards the light? It would have been as useless to them as their creeds.

Even his fellow-sufferers joined in the popular ridicule. "Father! forgive them!" was the immortal reply, "for they know not what they do."

But the power of the Man was in his soul, and was concentrated for a final triumph. It was the only "sign" he gave, or had to give, and it was a sign, not for himself, but for the world.

Few were the words he spoke. He threw a ray of light over the ebbing life of the repentant thief, who began to think of the unseen world which was so close to him, and to wonder whether indeed this prophet would be acknowledged *there*.

"If there is a kingdom, and you are to reign there," said he, "remember me."

"To-day shalt thou be with me in the rest of the spirit-world," answered Jesus, who well knew that the "resurrection" takes place in the hour of death.

Near the foot of the cross, stood a group of persons in speechless grief, the women who were nearest and dearest to him, and the beloved companion, John. Among them was his mother, through whose soul indeed the sword had pierced. "Oh! my son!" Ye mothers, who have hoped all things from a noble son,—can you picture what she suffered in that fearful week at Jerusalem? Her *child*!—the child of prophecy, and angel-born—in whom all her hopes had been so centred! She had believed in him so completely, her faith had been so tried on witnessing the strange and revolutionary nature of his mission,—she had been so full of revived hope on seeing the welcome at last tendered him by the people of Galilee, and now, — was this the end?

Her grief smote upon the spirit of her dying son.

"Take John!" he said. And to John he appealed—"Take her for a mother. Be a son to her."

It was all he could say. She drank most deeply of his cup of sufferings. And John succeeded at last in leading her away, where she could see and hear no more, while the rest remained and sought to give their silent sympathy.

Waves of agony passed over the frame of Christ. That he should completely realise the warfare of humanity, for a moment there was permitted an eclipse even of his all-seeing faith. The question, "Can the cause indeed be rescued from such a condition as this?" crossed his mind, and at last he exclaimed, in his extremity, "My God, my God—why hast thou forsaken me!"

The answer came we know not how, and the struggle, mental and physical, was over. Just as the seventh hour was entered upon, his lips murmured—"It is finished!" His head fell. The spirit of the man not of earth went forth to its own home to rest. Jesus of Nazareth, in the eyes of men, was dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOUL'S VICTORY.

IT is with a feeling of hope, and joy, and gratitude, that we turn to those brighter pages of the ancient records which have long concealed the holiest and most divine of truths.

That a strange power was at work, even in the darkness of Calvary, is shown by the events which caused even a superstitious feeling to seize on many of the Jews. The tremor of an earthquake, no very uncommon occurrence in Palestine, had taken place at the very hour, and slightly shaken the city. There had been a singular darkness, such as some of us have experienced even in our own time, for which science can hardly give an exact reason. And in some way the veil which hid the mystery of the church was torn asunder, making manifest the inner place which had been concealed from the eyes of its worshippers. Spirits of the departed were seen, "risen," in the quaint and conventional language of the past, "from the graves," but rather, visitors from an unseen world, and it was symbolical of the future intercommunication between it and the sphere of earth. The Roman centurion himself had been strongly impressed with the strange man whose majesty of spirit was something more than philosophers had ever realised. And there was a reactionary sentiment among the crowd, who returned home whispering to each other with a feeling of self-reproach. Only the priests failed to interpret this voiceless language. They were satisfied. "The heretic of holy mother church" had been disposed of at last. And sufferings or signs could be of no sort

of consequence. But for them the future finished what the present had begun. Failure and defeat are written on the lives of those who make themselves strongholds of opposition to a work consecrated to humanity, on which alone is or can be inscribed the word — victory. Judas had died by his own hand. Herod's ambition was frustrated by exile. Pilate was disgraced and banished. Caiaphas was removed from the imperial office of high-priest, and Annas was finally murdered by a mob in Jerusalem. And many of those who insulted and sought to humiliate Jesus, even in his depth of affliction, suffered themselves at the hands of the very power into which they had eagerly delivered him. Moreover, even the cross, strange to relate, had been the ancient and sacred symbol of life throughout all nations.

There is an avenging angel which follows men in the results of their own evil deeds. Spirits of blindness and darkness are powerless to protect those from whom the great and holy guardians of our world withdraw. They have not the foresight; they have not the ability; they have not the development; they have not the wisdom or love.

The Sabbath of the Passover, the great festival, was at hand, and the thoughts of those at Jerusalem were speedily turned to other themes, and the events connected with their own lives. Before it dawned, the body of Jesus, ascertained to be lifeless by the Roman guard, was delivered by the consent of Pilate to Joseph of Arimathæa. This man, who was not only wealthy, but a member of the Sanhedrin, had never given his consent to the extreme measures of the council, and for an important reason, was influenced by the great band of guardian spirits who had surrounded Jesus, to devote a tomb hewn in the rock, to the burial of the body. It was new; it had never been sullied by the influence of corruption; and it was necessary for the work to be outwrought within its still and silent chamber. There is no other way of accounting for a request which must

have made Joseph a mark for criticism among his friends, and the devoting of a rock-tomb made for himself, and considered sacred, to such a purpose, must have seemed a useless and objectionable proceeding. He made it because he was impelled, if not actually compelled; and wrapped in a clean cloth, and surrounded with fragrant spices, the body of the crucified one was speedily deposited within the rock, and the mouth closed by a well-fitting stone. Two women, who had shed many bitter tears, found a momentary consolation in witnessing that at all events the burial of the man they loved had received some honour.

The site of the true place of burial is of course entirely unknown, but over the supposed spot, now rises the "church of the Holy Sepulchre," and there several "Christian" sects are only restrained from fighting with each other by a Turkish guard.

Then, even the enemies of Jesus were compelled to bend to the will of the holy spirits. Some of the priests went to Pilate, and had a private interview with him.

"We request," said they, "that a guard shall be sent down to this tomb, until an interval of three days has elapsed, for if you remember, that impostor said he should rise again,—and in order to prevent his followers deceiving the people, and stealing the body, which would be more disastrous than ever, we wish to have the place watched."

Pilate rejoined that they could do just as they pleased; so, accompanied by some soldiers, these keen-witted persons, ready for all emergencies, and competent to regulate the universe itself, repaired to Joseph's garden, sealed the stone at the mouth of the tomb, and appointed a watch to remain by its side. It was curious that they seemed to have forgotten already that one of their charges against Jesus had been that he had said he would destroy and rebuild the temple of wood and stone.

We are well aware that the modern school of critics

has expended endless energy upon the slight apparent discrepancies which they represent completely invalidate the evidence in behalf of what is popularly known as "the resurrection." We may boldly say, that if the real conditions under which the ancient records were written were known, they would create astonishment at the accuracy with which the main facts are told. The discrepancies of detail are precisely such as occur every day in the relation of any particular fact. Some will omit this detail; others will add that. All may be correct, and the central reality stands out clear in the midst.

And now we come to the consummation of the mission of Christ. His birth was spiritual, and his organisation revealed its higher law; all through his life he had been manifesting the gifts and powers of a spiritual type of humanity, and dealing on all sides death-blows to materialism in every form; and his death, so far as it could be death, the result of his radical ideas, was permitted in order that it should illustrate, for all time, the sublime fact that the spiritual man can escape the disintegration of the body.

After such a fearful ordeal as crucifixion, the spirit of Jesus had recoiled from the earth-sphere, and passed into the world unseen of mortal eyes, but his body, wonderfully spiritualised, both in its original nature and by waves of triumphant suffering, had vital elements in every particle, and in the darkness and still repose of the intended grave, it lay, not as a corpse, but as a deposit of physical elements sufficient to render the spirit of Christ visible on his return. What was no longer necessary to him was dissipated in the atmosphere, and the remainder absorbed in his spiritualised body. It was similar to what spiritualists call a "materialisation," with this immense difference, that it took place in the arcana of *his own being*, and derived nothing from the foreign elements of others. Hence the great power of Jesus to appear for a length of time, in an open road, when he re-manifested himself to his friends.

It was the demonstration of a higher law of immortality; one strictly scientific, and destined ere long to be demonstrated over again in the process of the development of our race; and it had never before been revealed to the world. It was this idea of spiritual *perfection* which Christ sought in vain to impress on his audiences; it explains all his words; it dissolves every mystery; it illuminates his whole life. It came through woman, and spiritual union of an order unrealised before, and it dealt a blow such as men do not dream of, to the conditions of disease and death, which are so closely connected with the subjection of woman to man. The knowledge of a life after death had been understood on the earth long before, and accepted by its greatest thinkers. Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, Socrates, Cicero, had all taught it, and some of them knew it as a fact. It was believed in, in ancient Egypt, in Persia, in India, among the old order of the Druids, and the Pharisees themselves. But the idea that man could escape the crisis of disintegration which follows on a constantly decaying and changing body, had been made known of none. The work of the world's Christ was to illustrate the supreme object of the life of the planet, and, in Palestine, at a particular era, overshadowed by the signs of a culminating cycle, and at the commencement of a rapid struggle for progress in thought and organisation in Europe, the work was done.

We turn to the old pages, which surely should be held more sacred than they have ever been, since they reveal no god, but the highest hope of our humanity. They bear the stamp of truth.

The first thing the devoted women saw who loved Jesus with all the affection that womanhood bestows on pure and strong manhood, and who believed in him from first to last, was the vision of an angel. They had no need to roll away the stone to convey their spices within, for it was done. First, one of these beautiful spirits was seen; then two. And they were a sign of an Easter then, and one to come. For the Immortal Man was

one; but the immortality of men shall unfold through the dual power of man and woman. If there are any who do not believe that spirits of such dazzling appearance can be seen, or have ever visited this earth, they should know that such a sight has been witnessed by mortals more than once, and even in our own century. It is very rare; and such manifestations are full of meaning, — for the time has not yet come when the two worlds can be closely intermingled.

The one seen first spoke, and said, "Do not fear. You seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified; he has **RISEN**; *he is not here*; look within!"

They knew the work, and they knew all its events, and every stage of it. Well might Jesus say he was surrounded by a legion of angels. "Go — and tell the others that he is going into Galilee, where he will be seen as he foretold. Do you not remember that he spoke to you of all these things?"

Fear of this unusual sight fell upon all. The power was so great that the guard had fallen down in a sort of trance, and the first impulses of the women were to fly from the spot. Mary Magdalene, however, remained, and was still in tears, because she saw the cave was empty, and could not discover the body. The truth did not dawn upon her at once.

"Why do you weep?" asked one of the spirits, addressing her. And she suddenly turned and saw another form in the faint light of the dawn. Who was it? A man? The gardener?

"*Mary!*" — said a familiar voice, — and she recognised Jesus.

His first words were addressed to woman.

Eager to embrace him, she sprang forwards, but was forbidden. He was now a spirit himself, and could not bear the sudden touch of a mortal. And he spoke of a speedy return to the life of the invisible world. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and my God and your God." In that reply dogmatic*Trini-

tarianism receives its death-blow, and divine *humanity* is revealed.

On the appearance of some of his old companions, who could hardly believe the facts, he met them with a word of welcome.

"Do not fear," said he, — "tell the others, and they shall see me in Galilee."

The difficulty was to obtain credence for an account so strange, and until they had seen him themselves, there was a natural feeling of scepticism among many of them. The first words that come to the lips on hearing anything strange, anything joyful, after extreme suffering and despair, are sure to be — "It is impossible!" After Peter had himself investigated the empty grave in the rock, he returned home more full of astonishment than the satisfaction arising from joy. Considering the extreme suddenness and unexpected nature of the event, and the confused state of mind in which, for the time, they must have remained, — we may wonder that the accounts written are really so clear as they are.

Meanwhile, the soldiers who had been placed on guard recovered, and finding the rock-tomb open, and no one there, or anywhere present, recalled their strange vision of angelic presences. Fearful of the consequences to themselves, they repaired to certain members of the Sanhedrin, under whose orders they had acted, and told the literal truth. An immediate council was held, and it was resolved to hush up the story, both for the sake of the men, and their own priestly interests. Any publicity would only have stirred up a renewed interest in the martyred Nazarene. At all costs that was to be avoided. The soldiers were bribed to state that his companions had stolen away the body, and they were only too ready to follow the advice. The priests also privately spread this report among a large number of persons in Jerusalem, and made their last effort to destroy the glorious work which had con-

cluded there. No account of any part of the recent events was even to be written — the Nazarene was to be expunged from existence.

The result was precisely what it always is, in such cases. They simply excluded themselves from the bright sun-rays of a new day, and from all share in its warmth and beauty.

The next appearance of Christ was to two of his companions who were miles away from the city, on their way to a small village. They had decided to go there, to be away from the city of Jerusalem, still heavy with the sphere of a terrible spiritual conflict, and their conversation naturally turned upon the recent tragedy. Jesus drew near to them, but his form and figure had already become so changed and sublimated that they did not recognise him. Moreover, the possibility of his presence never once crossed their minds. He was able now to pass with the speed of an arrow from place to place, and at his will.

"What are you conversing about?" he asked of the sad-looking men. One of them replied that he surely must have heard of the terrible events which had recently occurred in the city.

"What events?" asked Jesus.

"The martyrdom of the great prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who was condemned to death, and crucified by the priests and Roman authorities. We had hoped he would have been the one who would have delivered our nation. The third day, of which he spoke, has passed, and some of our women friends have astonished us by saying that they have seen him, and also a vision of angels, who declared that he is alive. A few of us at once went to the tomb, and found it was indeed empty, but we saw nothing of him, and we cannot believe it."

Then Jesus himself endeavoured to teach them the necessities of the work of this martyred prophet.

"He fulfilled the prophecies by all these sufferings

you deplore," he observed. "Can you not see that they were *necessary*? The Jewish Christ was appointed to be a prophet to the world." And he sought to illustrate the victory of truth over opposition, and the perfect elucidation of the symbols and ceremonies of the past in a life of martyrdom and sacrifice.

This cheered his hearers, and eager for more instruction on the subject, and sympathy, they begged him to remain with them. It was like light in the darkness. He rested with them for a while, and at last used his power in an opposite direction, and willed that they *should* recognise who he was, and assumed the familiar countenance of the very prophet of whom their minds were full.

"Do you not know me?"

And before the words had been answered, and before the astonished men had time to reply — to avoid the human contact he could not yet bear, he vanished like a spirit from their sight.

Their scepticism was shattered at a blow; and eager to communicate their own experience to the others, they sped to Jerusalem, and joined them in the hours of dusk.

"Oh! our hearts have been so cheered by the words of a stranger who joined us on the road, and explained to us the real meaning of this crucifixion! And while we were listening to him, he showed us who he was. It is all true! We also have seen Christ."

The little group sat together in the twilight, with hope and belief at last rising within their breasts. The circle was one in the main of harmony and faith, although here and there a troubled doubt, born of the natural blindness of physical man, would still make itself felt, and Jesus, who perceived all that was going on, in a moment stood in the midst of them. He passed through the closed doors, for he had won the complete power over matter, which is the last attribute of man. His presence startled them all, and they knew not what to think. How did he come? Was it an apparition?

Then they recognised him, and the doubts fled to the winds. Jesus showed them the remains of the wound-marks in his hands and his feet.

"Do not be troubled," he said. "It is *not* an apparition. See — it is I — myself! Touch me, and see for yourselves, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as I have."

And he allowed himself, amid the more favourable conditions of a closed chamber, for the first time to be touched. In those words Christ emphatically declared his true nature; his appearance was *not* that of a spirit, but of a spiritual man, — one whose body had never known corruption, and was so sublimated as to be spirit itself, even to the flesh and to the bones. Well can we understand the paradoxical mental condition of that little group of witnesses. They "disbelieved for joy."

Requiring some vital elements for the time being, Jesus requested a little food, and afterwards endeavoured to explain to them the true nature of the Messiah-work. Then he again disappeared, as mysteriously as he came.

He desired to have as many witnesses as possible to this grand consummation of his mission, among those who were ripe for it. To have appeared to men like Pilate, or the members of the Sanhedrin, would have been alike impossible and a waste of strength. The sphere around them would have completely repelled a being so sensitive and spiritual as he had become; nor would they have understood himself or his teachings one whit the more clearly. His companions, by their devotion to him, furnished conditions which were suitable, and for the sake of a future period it was all-important to convince them. Thomas, who had been absent at the last meeting, was on the next occasion present. He had heard the emphatic statements of all his friends, but like many sceptical persons, had refused to credit them unless he could be himself a witness. It is the most common thing in the world, to find an individual who thinks the testimony of his own senses more important than the united evidence of a dozen

other people, and Thomas belonged to this class. Jesus was perfectly aware of it, and he gave the required proof. Again he passed through closed doors, and breathed on them all his beautiful words of peace. It was the watchword of his life. He then addressed Thomas, and told him to look at the wound-prints on his hands, and his side. Thomas obeyed the request, and uttered an exclamation of amazement. That this speech—really “My God!—the Master!”—should ever have been used to uphold the dogma of Trinitarianism is one of the most extraordinary instances of subsequent ecclesiastical superstition. It can only be paralleled by the literalism of the Jews with regard to Christ’s prophecy that the destroyed temple should be restored in three days. And especially is it strange and inexcusable with regard to one who plainly told one questioner that there was “one God,” who rebuked another who eagerly called him good with the rejoinder that no one was perfect save the Eternal One, invisible, and all-penetrating, and veiled from every eye, and who, after his reappearance at the tomb, told Mary that he should “ascend” to that One who was “his God and hers.” But what arguments avail when men are without inspiration and influx from the sphere above? They almost destroy truth by chaining it to their enslaved minds; and it is born with wings.

The conviction of Thomas was followed by several other manifestations of Christ, who was at times invisible and conversing with his angelic companions; and on other occasions projected his form visibly into the material world, and counselled and strengthened those who were “his own.” Well did he realise the grand result of the power of faith; yet, in the first instance, he desired the coming work to be based upon the clearest proof that he could possibly give.

Some of his followers went, as they had been instructed, into Galilee. Peter resumed there, for a little while, his old trade of fisherman, since the disturbed atmosphere of the city did not permit of meetings, and

of the immediate formation of a society. With several others, he saw Jesus standing on the beach, and in a little while they recognised him. With the same spiritual sight he had always manifested, he told them when to cast their nets, and they drew them in full, instead of empty, as they had done before. The common affairs and necessities of daily life were never despised by Jesus, and he came among them without a word of reproach for all the desertions and denials which had been the last drops in his bitter cup. He aided them as the friend and teacher of the old days, a man in whom liberty had been perfected, and never for one instant in the guise of a bishop or a pope, or a haughty high-priest with a long face, an air of solemn triumph, and an embroidered robe. The food prepared he ate with them for the last time, and then he addressed himself to Peter, as the future shepherd of those who would receive the new faith among the Jews. Appealing to him very earnestly, by his love for him, to carry on the work, he said, "Simon, feed my sheep! It will lead to martyrdom, but follow me!"

A soul less great than that of the Man of Nazareth would have remembered the scene in the palace-court in Jerusalem, when Peter failed to be the rock he had been called, and had succumbed to the influence of the sphere of earth. But Jesus knew nothing of the spirit of revenge. Now that he had the ability, he had not the faintest desire to rebuke any of these mortal friends. They had suffered; they had shed tears; they had struggled; and the trial of faith had been very hard. They wanted strength, and help, and love, and the divine Man, who was to become a guiding power in the world's future, and who had, indeed, "authority" in the sphere of spirit and of matter, wrapped his little flock round with the gentle influences of peace and love.

He foretold that John would live until his work would be widely manifested; and then, a little later, in the village where Lazarus had dwelt, — where his greatest power to bless others had been exercised, and where

the opposition which had resulted in his martyr-fate had first really begun to take a determined form, — with blessings on his lips, and the light of heaven in his eyes, the man who had overcome the “last enemy,” vanished to the deathless world which was his home.

Before a brief examination of those writings in the New Testament which follow the Gospels, as they are called, is entered upon, it may be well to offer a few further remarks upon the great principles involved in “the Christ.”

He represented Liberty, Purity, Completion and Immortality. We need no proofs to tell us that man is not free; that he is not pure; that he is imperfect; and that he is subject to death. In this century, through the use of his brain, he has acquired a very extraordinary and rapid indirect power over matter. He has ceased to use his muscles with regard to many things; instead, he thinks. Hence we possess the control of the imponderable force of steam, and we are learning to use the still more ethereal and more powerful agency of electricity. It is an age of intellect and profound research into physical phenomena, and physical laws; and it will be followed by a knowledge of spiritual phenomena and spiritual laws, and the age of Soul.

There is one broad gateway to this era, and that is in the perfect union of the masculine and feminine principles in man and woman, — of Wisdom, and of Love. All the intellect on earth will never create a Christ-like purity in man until the divine spirit of love is born in him. There is a great truth concealed in what priests have called the “Immaculate Conception.” Jesus of Nazareth was conceived spiritually in inspiration, and in an unknown purity. His mother was a free woman; her aspirations breathed around the child; her being was held sacred as a temple holding the very Shekinah!

Therefore the great questions of the freedom of woman, the development of the race, and the destruction of death, are indissolubly linked together.

Man may build a steam-engine, or a great tabernacle of worship, as he calls it; he may erect hospitals, colleges, institutions; he cannot arrest the tide of disease, and suffering, and dissolution. It is the master-work of woman. His very inventions are but prophecies of what she will evolve in perfect man; the voice which sounds thousands of miles away through an iron wire will be supplemented by the voice of the spirit; the speed of the train and the swift progress of the ocean-steamer, will be succeeded by the ability of man to move from place to place by his will. He knows his power of thought. He does not dream of his power of will. He recognises electricity; he does not imagine the strength of the *soul-force* of nature. He is reading the past of the planet like an open book; he is penetrating the present with his knowledge; but he does not dream of the great future.

The "mighty work" of the present day is to manifest and illustrate the result of marriage in its perfection. That alone can affect the organisation. And by perfect marriage is meant the union of soul as well as body between man and woman who have reached the last stages of physical life. For, before the soul is strong enough to open the gateway of Immortality, it must have passed through the ages, and learned to realise love as a principle, and not as a physical passion.

If institutions and societies, and the purification of single individuals could have availed to rescue man from his gehenna of planetary life, and such it must be until he knows how to control the matter which controls him, he would long since have been free. Nor in these are specially included the churches, for they have held woman in subjection, but rather the numerous humanitarian and reformatory societies which have been formed for mutual help and individual development. In their place, they have done, and may do, much to sustain the work of the powers above who are guiding all that may broaden the pathway to the Christ-reign, or the "Christ-man," but the key of the

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kingdom of heaven resides in the dual force, and the death-blow to the sufferings resulting from imperfect organisation, can be dealt by the union of Man and Woman alone. They must be the heart and the inspiration of any society which will receive the influx and impulse of the New Age.

Civilised man, through the strain and strife of the present hour, is growing increasingly sensitive in nerve and brain. Immense cities have been formed throughout Europe and America. The temptations to pleasures of the senses of all kinds were never more numerous or more widely spread. And unless purer men and women are born, the greatest of nations are in danger of shipwreck on the rocks of materialism. The pure man and woman cannot be influenced save through the strong emotion of love; they will learn and be able to consecrate the expression of that emotion to sacred objects; they will be drawn to the highest love of all, which is the attraction of soul. These are the only safeguards. Organised as he is at present, man inevitably falls to a lower plane, and womanhood is degraded every day by the desecration of that great power which is nothing short of life or death.

A well-known physician of the old school has lately written: "The organisation of the average European and American of the cultured classes of the present day, is so much finer and more sensitive than it was one century, or even a quarter of a century ago, that they cannot bear the same medicines, the same stimulants or narcotics, or the same ordinary food that they could then. What was appropriate, and necessary, and right for the coarser organisations of the past, is, for the finer organisation that has developed with the intense brain-work of our time, suicidal or cruel."

And these keen sensibilities are so many tendrils which must cling around the vital tree of virtue, or the barren tree of vice.

In the church, in the senate, in the selection of those

who make laws which control her and her children, woman's voice is hushed. The principles of Love and Wisdom are everywhere divorced, and the marriage of physical and magnetic attraction, is deemed to be so sacred, that it is guarded by the arm of the law, and its offspring, so often illegitimate and in the truest sense, — undesired, desecrated, diseased, sacrificed, — are considered to represent the best creative powers of men and women. The man-priest talks of sin; the statesman of war; the man of science of "force" and the evolution of the past; and so the human tide, suffering, and unconscious of the origin of that suffering, rolls on.

" It suffers from
Itself; none else compels,
None other holds it that it live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug, and kiss
Its spokes of agony."

Is it true? Look upon the fellow-beings around you, and pause and consider; what do you see? Physical and imperfect forms and features; cruelty, brutality, selfish bigotry, brutish scepticism, greed, injustice, tyranny, rotten systems of politics and governments, grinding toil, love of the applause of the hour, indifference to right, indifference to wrong, malice and slander, hatred of truth, and of reform, and of righteousness, religious superstitions, and bitterness and animosity between sects and leaders in the state, intemperance, prostitution, insanity, dishonesty, suicide, capital punishment, murder, war, diseases of a thousand types, death, and tears, and corruption. All this, mitigated as it has been by the work of Christ, is accepted as the common lot, and it is the inevitable result of a social system which ignores, enslaves, or silences, Woman.

The churches, the so-called religious and moral safeguards of the people, now constitute little more than centres of opposition to radical reforms. Enormous sums of money are expended in maintaining these ecclesiastical institutions, and they accomplish

a certain amount of useful humanitarian work, so far as is possible, in relieving and soothing the sick and dying. But to make sickness and death unnecessary is a work for which they are wholly unadapted, and liberty of thought or action has never been encouraged by the clerical societies. They possess no real inspiration; they are ignorant of psychic laws; of the wisdom of the past, of the nature and destiny of man. Woman is excluded from the pulpit, and in the Roman church the priest who is taught in his liturgy to style one woman the "queen of heaven," whatever such a position may be, is also educated to regard celibacy as the necessary condition of the priestly office.

The physiologist, and the student of spiritual laws, alike realise that celibacy, save as a temporary method, as part of a larger training, is by no means a condition of purity. It either involves lack of development in body and soul; or it tends to increase the strongest instinct of nature. Neither condition is of the most suitable type for dealing, as in confession, with the weaknesses and sufferings of humanity. We require in our cities, halls in which the religion of a true science is taught; in which the voices of both man and woman can be heard; in which may be unfolded the laws of man's being, and a better system of social relations; in which man-worship is unknown, and man is considered as himself the microcosm, and the church of God.

If the religious teachers of our day ever desire to see the Jews return to the spiritual Palestine of prophecy, or India and the East accept the Christ, they must discard superstition, and make known the great principles established and illustrated by the divine Man in their true glory. Then his spirit will go abroad over the earth. It is useless to repeat creeds and formulas, to eat bread, and to fall on their knees before an ecclesiastical fetish, when the real Christ is barred without, and gazing upon the perishing multitudes with sorrow and

compassion. His spirit, guiding the martyrs both of religion and science through the centuries which have witnessed the civilisation of Europe, has been the eternal power which was ever pointing to liberty, and breaking chains. He, and others like unto him, whose garments are as the lightning, and whose countenances shine like the sun, have guided and guarded that spiritual force until it should broaden into the progress of the present century.

And he now desires that woman should be free! "The kingdom of God is within us." The real temple is Man. In woman who is truly united to man dwells Life and Immortality. She is an Ark pregnant with the possibilities of salvation to a stricken people, and over whom sweeps the mystic ARC prophesying the calm of the striving elements. It is for her, therefore, to break through the long masculine rule; the invasion into her beautiful and sacred territory of motherhood; she it is, who, for the sake of the suffering multitudes must dare to put on the armour of the Spirit, and draw an Immortal Sword against the "last enemy;" and strong in a righteous cause, in a holy war, in the power given her of thee, O thou victorious CHRIST—she must be to man like a flaming angel-spirit, who inspires, and uplifts him, and loves his unrealised strength,

"Till she may win her glory—and he be raised to thine."

For the freedom of Woman means the freedom of the Race.

PART II.

THE WARFARE OF THE TRUTH.

CHAPTER I.

PETER'S DECLARATION.

IN the light of the great conception detailed in the ancient records known as the "gospels," the absence of direct historical evidence with regard to their authorship is of slight importance. The voice of holy spirits and a sacred design sweep through their pages; their authenticity is that of sublime truth. It is almost incredible that any person, indeed, of ordinary intelligence could conceive that they owe their existence to any mere human source, and one of the deepest thinkers of modern times, John Stuart Mill, has asked with profound intuition — "Who, among his disciples, or their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels?" The whole course of history arises to declare that the life-work of the Man of Nazareth would have been the very last thought of, or even desired, by the most enlightened among men, impossible to have entered the minds of any Jews, or any Romans, in Palestine, two thousand years ago; impossible to have been conceived by any minds of our own time. The Man was from above; he was not of earth; he was wise with another wisdom than that which is valued by common clay; he was powerful with a mightier power.

In dwelling upon the inherent truth manifested in the records, and the subsequent account of the first efforts made by the companions and followers of Jesus to make known the character of his teaching, and its sublime consummation, it is impossible to overlook the marked difference between the spiritual manifestations to which they allude, and those contained in some of

the rejected manuscripts, which resemble the histories of the hermits, and the early saints. We have seen that Christ made known unrecognised possibilities in the human race, but the power he exhibited took place strictly according to certain laws. It was concerned with healing, interior vision, prophetic insight, materialisation of certain elementary forces, exercise of will under certain conditions, the magnetic dispossession of undeveloped spirits from human organisms, and finally the complete spiritualisation of his own being. In the case of his followers, they attained a partial development in the same direction; they, also, healed, possessed clairvoyant sight, were forewarned of future events, and heard and saw the voices and presences of spiritual beings. Not one of them, however, escaped the physical law of corruption. They attained the development which is the key of immortal life in the spirit-world, but not the higher immortality. For this can only be reached through spiritual birth and organisation, and the true spiritual marriage has been unknown on our planet.

Contrast these conditions with the "miracles" of the early saints, as they are called. In the one you will recognise order, and the light which results from the action of higher law; in the other there appears little beyond chaos. During the epidemic of asceticism which afflicted Europe in the third century, and which was the result of Roman vice and persecution, every sort of marvel was circulated and believed in with regard to the more notorious anchorites. Jerome gravely relates that the noted hermit, Paul, was buried by two lions, who dug a grave and deposited the body in it, and then begged a blessing from "Saint" Anthony. And we read of a hyena "knocking at the door" of Macarius, who, after rebuking it for bringing a stolen fleece to him, finally accepted the gift after the animal had sworn to cease thieving for the future. These were not allegories, or intended as such. We do not find Jesus talking with animals, or his companions keeping

company with lions; and one of the most valuable characteristics of what is known as the New Testament, and an eternal witness to the reality of its statements, resides in the fact that, while spiritual law, such as can be sustained and supported by modern evidence, is apparent, in no instance is there so much as an allusion to a violation of organic law such as may be recognised in the legends above.

With these brief preliminary observations, it is with deep interest that we turn to the first stages of the long conflict of the spirit of Christ with the materialism of the world.

The earliest account of these is given in the faithful memorial called the "Acts of the Apostles;" and the first words of that narrative breathe of freedom.

The writer states, in alluding to the reappearance of Jesus after his crucifixion, that he had finally requested them to remain quietly together in Jerusalem to await their coming development through spiritual process. "John, indeed, baptised with water," said he; "but you shall receive what alone is of any importance, — the baptism of the spirit!"

Jesus, indeed, had relinquished the rite of baptism at an early stage in his labours; and it was only regarded as a sacred ceremony by the earliest followers because the prophet who had foretold his mission had employed it. It was *not* considered the essential condition of an early convert, far less "necessary to salvation," whatever that may be, as children are mistaught in church catechisms; and it took seven centuries to produce that extreme decline into mental slavery which resulted in the execution of more than four thousand persons for refusing the rite, by Charlemagne at the bidding of one of the popes. And, as we review the pages which follow the gospels, it will become clear that the performance of the rite of baptism occupied a very secondary place in the minds of the followers of the Nazarene.

In reply to the last lingering question of these be-

loved companions, whether at last Palestine should become a liberated kingdom which would accept and acknowledge him, Jesus only said that it was not for them to know times or seasons. They must be witnesses to the truth he had made known, in Jerusalem and Judæa, and also in outcast Samaria, and far beyond. The forty days of completion passed away; the cloud concealed him, and he vanished from their sight, and the same beautiful spirits who had watched his career and had appeared at the rock-hewn tomb, manifested themselves once again, and declared with truth that he would reappear in the "same manner," and in visible form. When this would take place, they did not say. But we may add, — when the impact of the spiritual world is felt all over the earth, and truer knowledge and a purer sphere make the presence of such an one as Jesus of Nazareth possible, he will be, as it were, *at the doors*. He will be recognised and welcomed at first by the few. But before he again appears and can be seen, he must be known; and the false creeds of nearly twenty centuries completely swept away. The truth is his herald; and those who despise it, are rejecting him.

The little band of followers kept closely in each other's society, thereby concentrating the forces around them. Among them were many women, and the mother, Mary, who had begun to realise that even the cross, which had almost torn her stricken heart asunder, was a means to a divine end. They selected another fellow-labourer to take the place of the unfortunate Judas, one Matthias who had been with them and the Master, and who had witnessed his reappearance.

Then they were all impelled to draw together at an appointed hour; and, the conditions being suitable and the time ripe, all were influenced by the agency of powerful and holy spirits, whose presence shook the house and swept the chamber like the wind. They spoke languages unknown to them, and a brilliant light appeared over each of their heads.

Whether the languages spoken were, or were not, of service to the little circle in their future efforts, they aided the conception of all others which Christ, who was directing the work, desired, namely, that the Gentiles should be placed on a footing of religious equality with the Jews. Moreover, the mixed population in Jerusalem furnished another, and a strong reason, for this first exercise of spirit-power.

Many persons were passing in the street beneath, and, attracted by unusual sounds emanating from the secluded chamber, pressed up the steps and, out of curiosity, looked within. A little crowd was speedily formed, and many of the foreigners were astonished at hearing their various native languages spoken by Galileans. Is this so extraordinary? A spirit familiar with a certain language can speak it through the lips of a mortal, when that mortal is in a sufficiently prepared and harmonious state. A thousand witnesses can come forward in behalf of this fact in our own century. Those who desire to ascertain the laws of spirit-control, sometimes used as preliminary to the higher stage of interior growth, should weigh their evidence. Those who do not, will very likely arrive at some such conclusion as that of the sceptics in the street of Jerusalem, and talk of imposture, or insanity, the modern counterparts of the accusation of "*new wine*."

Peter, who overheard the buzz of criticism around them, became at once inspired to address the people.

"Listen!" said he. "My companions are not drunk. Is it likely they would be at this hour? What you have witnessed is only the fulfilment of the words of one of our own prophets."

And he gave a very apt quotation from the book of Joel, which foretold widespread spiritual manifestations at the time of the appearance of the Messiah, and declared that the words were fulfilled.¹ Who was

¹ Joel ii, 28 to 31. A reference to these prophecies will show that it was said the "sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,"—

the Messiah? Addressing himself especially to his fellow-countrymen, Peter boldly declared that Jesus of Nazareth had been sent by God, that his crucifixion had been permitted and designed, and that he had been "loosed from the ordeal of death, *because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*" David had alluded to him in the song which foretold that the "holy one" should not see "corruption." It was with the eye of a prophet that David had foreseen the immortality of the Christ. Jesus had fulfilled these visions and predictions, and all of them had been witnesses of the fact. Since his return to the unseen world, he had given them these gifts of the spirit. "Let all our people," he concluded, "know this, that this Jesus, whom you have crucified, is the Christ, the expected Messiah!"

These courageous words seemed, at the time, to have had some effect on the crowd. Some requested to know what they ought to do. Peter earnestly advised them to accept this great truth, and to "repent," or sever themselves from those who had been guilty of so great a crime in Jerusalem. He advised baptism, not as in any way a necessity, but as a sign that they belonged to the party of reform. It is stated that three thousand persons, about this time, accepted the new belief. Whether they really understood it in its highest aspect, or whether they remained faithful or not, it is impossible to say. The probability is that persecution scattered some, and silenced others.

For a time the chosen workers prospered. They lived together in harmony, shared each other's possessions, and gave away what they could in charity. And remembering the request of Jesus during their last meeting, at the time of the passover, it was their custom to have a meal together, and meet in a spirit of love, as a memorial of him. It was a simple and natural action.

in other words, as it has been well said, that the Jewish church would cease to be a light to the people, while in the nation there would be tumults and persecutions. A "new dispensation" is at once the result of the one, and the origin of the other.

In itself it was of no sort of use ; and it is interesting to trace the stages of advance this little memorial of Jesus took, until at last it reached the death of a mere stereotyped rite, the thing of all others he had condemned. His own companions merely accepted the idea as the spiritual interpretation of the feast of the Jewish passover ; the early Christians instituted stated love-feasts, on the first day of the week, around a table at which they sang and prayed ; the church, or the creed-institution, formed the table as a species of altar, placed it at the eastern end of an edifice devoted to strict worship and prayers, and gave the meal into the hands of officiating priests, who could alone partake of both the bread and wine, It received the name of the "Eucharist," and, in the course of time, volumes of argument were wasted upon such absurdities as "transubstantiation," salvation through the "elements," and other ecclesiastical elaborations. The early fathers made as much havoc with the mission of Christ as Saul did with the early Jewish converts.

The speech of Peter showed that he no longer looked for the special deliverance of Palestine ; he had become inspired with a far loftier idea, and was indeed under powerful spirit-influence ; but he was never sufficiently free in mind to accomplish all that Jesus desired. He clung to Judaism from force of habit, and although he lived as a Gentile, his opinion was more than once unreliable on questions of crucial importance ; he recognised the authority of Moses too completely, and he hardly realised the perfect liberty the work of the world's Christ demanded.

It was at this time that he appeared in his noblest light, and his courage in facing such opposition and incredulity as existed in Jerusalem, showed an exalted and beautiful faith. The little band of men soon became known. They still attended the temple services, and it was on one of the occasions of their repairing there that Peter effected a remarkable cure, not incredible, not impossible, but exhibiting unusual power.

To the poor cripple who sat at the gate begging for alms, he gave the touching reply: "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I to thee. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, arise and walk!" And, as he touched him, the lameness disappeared.

This excited considerable comment, and one would have thought such works as these, as in the case of Jesus himself, would have compelled universal recognition. But when the minds of human beings are encrusted with prejudices, no evidence will enlighten their darkness, and perhaps it is best that it should be so. The voice of truth is grander even than the healing of a cripple; if men will not listen to that, they will derive no benefit by its being enforced on their attention through any unusual event. Their spirits are unripe; and time must be allowed for many such, who exist in the present as in the past, to grow and expand.

For the moment, however, the case of the lame man excited, at all events, wonder, and seeing that attention was directed towards them, Peter took the opportunity of addressing the crowd with another very fearless appeal. Asking them why they gazed upon him in the way they did, he at once denied that the deed was performed through his own agency; it was done by an unseen one, that of Jesus, who was the chosen messenger of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

"And him," said Peter, "you delivered up, even when Pilate would have released him; you gave up the Prince of Life, in exchange for a murderer, and executed the righteous one. But he arose from the chamber of death, and we are witnesses of the fact. You may have done all this in ignorance, as well as your rulers, but Christ has fulfilled the words of the prophets. Repent of it, however, that this crime may be blotted out, and that the spirit of Jesus may indeed come among us, for he must remain in the unseen world until this earth is regenerated, and of this the prophets have long ago

spoken. Moses foretold the appearance of Jesus, and charged the people to receive him, and many other prophets also. You are their sons, and the inheritors of the promise made to Abraham, and to you God has sent his servant, to bless you, and to show you how to become pure and righteous men."

One can imagine the effect of such words as these, uttered in Solomon's porch, and the mingled sympathy, semi-belief, utter scepticism, and angry contempt with which they were heard. The priests, the captain of the Temple, and the cultured Sadducees, on hearing of the stir, came out, and were, of course, deeply indignant. "Teaching the people that this Jesus has triumphed over death! Will there never be an end of him?"

Notwithstanding the sympathy of many thousands, they immediately exercised their authority, and Peter and John were arrested, and imprisoned for the night. The prophetic words of Jesus were already being acted out. The inevitable opposition was taking the form of persecution. On the following day they were brought before the Sanhedrin, among whom were both Annas and Caiaphas. Peter was asked by what means he had restored the cripple. Immediately, his lips were filled with an inspired reply. Without the faintest fear, such as he had previously shown during the examination of his beloved Teacher, he said: "If you wish to know by what power a good deed has been performed, I will tell you. I desire you all to know, and all the Jews in Palestine to know, that it has been done through Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, whom you crucified, and who arose from death, and it is through him that this man stands here before you whole. Jesus is the stone which the builders rejected, and he has been made the head corner-stone. And in no other one is there any Messiahship, for there is no one under heaven but him who is able to show us a true salvation."

The members of the great council were greatly surprised at such a bold speech, especially from men who compared with themselves, were ignorant and unedu-

cated. They recalled that they had been companions of the Nazarene. After conferring together, they arrived at a decision which evinces human nature in every aspect. They could not deny that the cripple was healed; that was a fact. But they had not the faintest intention of accepting the philosophy which had been attached to the fact. The best way, they agreed, was to threaten these two persistent followers of Jesus, and hush the matter up.

Addressing them publicly, they told them that they must cease to deliver any more addresses or teachings about Jesus of Nazareth. This, Peter and John, with unshaken fidelity, openly declined to do.

"We must," said they "obey the voice of God rather than that of men; and it is a duty to speak of what we know is true,—and of all that we have seen and heard."

The council again threatened them, and they were set free, and rejoined their fellow-workers, to whom they gave an account of their persecution. So far from being terrified into silence, they prayed for strength.

"Thy servant Jesus was sacrificed according to Thy counsel! And now, behold, how we also are threatened! Grant unto us thy servants to speak with boldness; enable us to heal the sick; enable us to exercise the gifts of the spirit through thy servant Jesus."

What a noble prayer,—a prayer that the work should go on, the Truth be made known,—not that they should escape the suffering which would inevitably arise! No wonder it was answered. Christ, and angelic spirits of his "order," listened to it. They gave them still greater strength, still greater ability to speak, and to do all that was required for the sake of men.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MARTYR.

THE little band of workers again and again taught the people the immortal victory of Jesus, and help and means were given by many of those who believed them, and desired to aid the progress of their labours.

Among the latter was one Joseph, who sold a field he possessed, and contributed the money to this common fund. He received the name of Barnabas from the apostles, owing to his inspirational gift, and evinced from the first a deep interest in their work. All were not so honest. Two persons, Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, also sold some property, and represented that the sum they contributed was the whole of the price they had received. Peter, with clear vision, saw the falsity of the statement. He addressed Ananias with indignation, telling him it was far better that he should have kept his property altogether. He had "attempted to deceive, not men, but the powers above." The man was terribly agitated on perceiving the exposure of his falsehood, and the anger of Peter, so much so, that whether he had heart disease, or was constitutionally liable to seizures, as was probably the case, or not, his agitation cost him his life.

A few hours afterwards, his widow entered the room, and repeated the falsehood. Peter asked her if she had sold the property for a certain sum. She at once said they had. Then he addressed her with equal indignation, informing her that her husband was *already buried*, and foretelling her own immediate end. The unfortunate woman, horror-struck at the intelligence

she received, fell down in a fit which cost her also her life, and the corpse was speedily buried with that of her husband.

There is no reason to suppose that there was any other reason for the deaths of these two persons than a natural cause. The no doubt diseased Ananias fell a victim to his own agitation, a result of his own deceitful conduct, and what he considered its extraordinary revelation; and such a shock as that which Sapphira received was enough to kill any woman. Many persons have succumbed to the effects of sudden and disastrous news, and it is a matter to be deplored that Peter, who possessed a very impulsive character, was not sufficiently imbued with the Christ-spirit of love to reason with a woman who, at all events, had believed in his teaching, and to gradually break the sad tidings of her husband's death to her. He, also, had denied the truth in a crucial hour, and we know the reply of the Man of Nazareth to those who desired speedy judgment on the town which rejected him. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." Those who thus paid the penalty of their misdeeds, have been, alas! only two among hundreds of thousands of human beings who have deceived others, and spoken and acted falsehood, not once, but many times. Do we, or ought we, to desire condign punishment to fall even on those who seek to betray the work of holy spirits, who deceive others with regard to it, who keep back a part of the "price" that has been "paid" for it, and who act in such a way as to throw blame on the innocent? The voice of love replies "No." The spirit must sooner or later recognise its wrong-doing. This is suffering enough; for it is the suffering, the remorseful fire of expiation.

Peter and his fellow-workers attracted more attention from the people than ever, and their healing gifts increased so greatly, that some even believed the shadow of Peter would benefit them. The aura around him n

doubt extended far beyond his shadow, and when concentrated by unseen guides, was capable of effecting some remarkable cures. They even repaired again to Solomon's Porch, and braved the worst terrors of the authorities.

All this could not last long. By order of the Sanhedrin they were speedily arrested and imprisoned again. This gave the angel-band around them an opportunity of showing that bolts and bars formed no obstacles where their servants were concerned. One of the spirits opened the doors, and leading them forth, told them to speak to the people — "all the words of this Life" — the immortal Life of Jesus of Nazareth. Those who dispute the possibility of such an occurrence will one day know what spirits under certain conditions can do. The faithful men again went to the Temple and again addressed the people as before. Meanwhile a formal council composed of the Sanhedrin and the senate met early in the morning, and sent for the prisoners. The officers came without them, and detailed the facts. The evidence of the prison officials showed that the doors had been re-locked, and that the warders were at their posts, and the council was not a little perplexed on hearing the report of an unaccountable event. As for belief, that was the last thing they thought of; they only feared the result, — one which might be fatal to their own system.

Some one then arrived in haste in the court, and informed them that the men were teaching the people in the Temple. The council at once had them quietly re-arrested, for to have shown any violence might have brought the officers into immediate collision with the crowd, and they were once more taken before it.

The high-priest, who was doubtless Caiaphas, addressed them with great severity. "We forbade you to give any more addresses about Jesus of Nazareth, but you have filled the city with your teachings, and desire to bring this man's blood upon us."

Peter answered that "they must obey God rather

than men," and this alone was sufficient to incense any ecclesiastical authorities. Do they not always know just exactly how God is to be obeyed? Worse followed. He went on—"Jesus is the Messiah of the God of our Fathers! And you crucified him, committed him to a shameful execution,—but *he* is the real Prince, and a Saviour sent to Israel to show us how to live righteously. He has been delivered from the power of death,—and of this we are witnesses, as well as those gifts of the spirit which God gives to those who obey him."

The whole Sanhedrin was filled with anger on hearing such dreadful heresies, and had it not been for Gamaliel, who was of a milder temper, the poor truth-speakers might have been executed there and then. Gamaliel was highly respected for his character and learning, and he gave the same worldly and common-sense advice which influenced Pilate during the trial of Jesus. "Do not trouble yourselves about all this," he said: "we have seen these outbursts of fanaticism, these reformatory epidemics, before. There was Theudas, and Judas of Galilee, and all the crowds who followed them. Well, it all came to nothing, and even the people who were led away by them were killed in the riots. My advice to you is to let these men alone, for if they belong to the same class, and no doubt they do, their efforts will be overthrown; if they are really inspired, this cannot be the case, and you might only be opposing a work of God."

This counsel was accepted, and after the persecuted teachers of the new faith had undergone the punishment of scourging, and had been again forbidden to teach this heresy about Jesus, they were liberated. It is not easy to crush inspired souls. The faithful and heroic missionaries persisted in their efforts, went daily to the Temple, and openly taught that Jesus was the true Christ, to all their audiences. The meetings at Solomon's Porch must have been known far and wide.

Among the various converts to the truths to which

Peter and his colleagues had given such brave utterance, were many Hellenists, or Jews who spoke the Greek language, and who belonged to the "Dispersion," and had gradually developed wider sympathies than the Jews of Judæa, even when the latter had accepted the same belief. The latter regarded them with a feeling of exclusiveness and jealousy, and hence arose the complaint with regard to the Hellenist widows. The twelve chosen co-workers, who had no time to attend to the practical details of their little treasury, requested some men of good character and reputation to distribute what was necessary. They themselves had enough to do in private and public as teachers, and in all probability as much was effected in private as in public. For a time it seemed as if Jerusalem was about to be penetrated by the voice of the Spirit, and it is stated that even a number of priests listened to it at last. It must be remembered, however, that there were thousands of priests, as well as numbers of synagogues, at that time in Jerusalem, and that they almost certainly belonged to the non-authoritative and non-influential section of ecclesiastics.

One of those who had been called upon to attend to the daily necessities of the society, and aid the poor Hellenists, was Stephen, who had himself become endowed with inspirational and other gifts due to spiritual influence. He was accustomed to address the people in the Hellenist synagogues, and his addresses were characterised by a spirit of freedom beyond anything that had been heard before. Christ desired this. He saw that, notwithstanding the courage of his late companions, and their outspoken words, that they had not taught, or even realised, that Judaism had done its work, and must make way for higher conceptions of morality and religion. Stephen's discourses were remarkably eloquent, and just for that reason they stirred up all the more opposition. It was the first step in the direction required for reaching the Gentiles, and it resulted, in the year 37 A.D., in the first martyrdom.

Persons who had heard his speeches were examined—possibly they were spies—and they stated on oath that he had spoken in a blasphemous manner of Moses and of God. He, also, was therefore at once arrested by the Sanhedrin, and evidence was given against him to the effect that he had spoken against the Temple and the law, and had even said that this Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the church, and revolutionise the customs which Moses had given to the Jews.

All looked on Stephen, whose face was illuminated by the beautiful power of inspiration, which was falling upon him. He was only eager for one thing—to speak. To the question of Jonathan, the high-priest of the year, "Is all this true?" he delivered in answer that noble defence which cost him his life. He appealed to them as brothers and fathers, to listen. He then gave a sketch of the history of Abraham, and Joseph, and the work of Moses, and in such a manner that none present could accuse him of want of patriotism, or of belief in the work accomplished by the idolised deliverer of Israel.

But he exalted Moses only to show the force of his next statement. "*He* had said that a prophet should arise like unto himself! And as for the subsequent history of their common forefathers, they had resisted Moses and turned to idolatry; and even, although Solomon had subsequently built a temple for the worship of God, yet God dwelt not in houses made with hands. Had not one of old declared that His temple was the universe, and that no house could be built for Him?"

This was somewhat similar to all that Jesus had taught himself, only his teaching was far deeper, and pointed out a truth connected with a coming age. It excited visible and intense indignation in the council, who were no doubt rejoicing over the grandeur of the almost completed Temple, and that they at once showed the nature of their feeling is clear from the sudden outburst with which Stephen closed his fruitless appeal. Calling them "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart

and ears," — and this in itself was a fearless invective against the mere rite of circumcision, — he told the council to their face that they acted as their fathers had done, those fathers who had resisted Moses, that they despised the voice of the Spirit, and had persecuted and killed all the prophets, the very same who had foretold the coming of the 'righteous one' whose betrayers and murderers they were!"

It was too true, so had Isaiah perished; so had Jeremiah; so had Ezekiel, and so had John.

"And as for the law," said he, "which has been ordained by angels, even that you do not observe!"

One can realise how absolutely true to fact the narrative is. The hatred he excited was such as to inflame the Sanhedrin to deeds of actual violence. The shameless heretic! To the stake with him! How can he dare to speak such horrible blasphemies against our holy religion! To exalt above everybody this crucified Jesus when we know the law says "cursed is he that hangeth on a tree!"

But Stephen saw something other and far above the spectacle of the crowded hall, and the angry faces of the priests. With his inner vision opened he saw the Nazarene looking upon him, and a scene so surpassingly pure and beautiful that he called it the "glory of God." It seemed to him so perfect that it must be divine. Mortals know not the glory of these higher spheres of life and light, and when they see one of its inhabitants, like John, they are ready to fall down and worship a being who seems almost like a god. Stephen saw not only Jesus, but what he thought must be the dwelling-place of the Eternal Soul.

"Oh!" he exclaimed — "I see heaven itself, and the Son of Man standing in the presence of God!"

Stopping their ears to prevent such polluting heresies from reaching them, they rushed upon the hapless seer, and without any pretence of legal formalities, or judicial condemnation, dragged him outside the city walls, and stoned him until he died.

It was a fearful sight, but soon over. Stephen called out to Jesus to "receive his spirit." He had seen the Master, and it was a ray of light in his last agony. Then, following in the footsteps of the strong one, — and oh! what strength does it not require to pray for those who seek to murder us and the mission we know is heaven-sent — he exclaimed, "Lay not this sin to their charge!" — and passed out into the sphere of rest which was no longer a vision, but a great reality.

It was the "strait gate, and the narrow way," O, Stephen, but the life into which thy spirit entered wrapped thee round with joy, even before thy bleeding form was cold beneath the accursed stones!

The garments of this poor martyr to human bigotry and blindness were laid at the feet of one of those who had voted against him in the Sanhedrin, and whose name was Saul.

This sad occurrence, for to mortal view, such it must have seemed, was followed by a wave of persecution against all who belonged to the new brotherhood, and in consequence, all, except the leaders, were scattered far and wide over the country. This no doubt aided the spread of the truth, but it must have been a period full of suffering. The death of Stephen caused great grief among the converts. And Saul did his utmost to destroy the society, and even houses were searched, and men and women known to belong to it were committed to prison.

How or why the companions of Jesus themselves escaped is not clear, unless the fact of their being notoriously blameless as regards the observances of the Jewish law, explains it. They had openly declared Jesus to be the Messiah, but they had not meddled with the question of Judaism, and their own practices would have been in fact a complete barrier to any effective work in other nations. The persecution was all the more irrational owing to the laxity which then prevailed in the Sanhedrin with regard to ordinary crimes. But heresy, — the seduction of the people from the "true

faith," is, of course, the sin which cannot be forgiven, — by priests. It was a duty to rid Jerusalem of this pestilent teaching. And the duty had to be done. The voice of truth, — never again to be heard as before, to sound in future in alien ears, and in far-off lands, — was hushed in the Temple porch, and the synagogues, and the streets.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVINCED PHARISEE.

AMONG those who fled from the city was Philip, one of the Hellenist committee, of which Stephen had been a member, and who was an inspired and gifted man.

He repaired to the despised town of Samaria, and began to labour anew. There it was that he came in contact with two singular incidents, both of which must have had a wide-spread effect. The first concerned a person called Simon, who had achieved a reputation by what the narrative calls "sorceries," that is the performance of certain occult manifestations through the influence of either sub-human, or undeveloped spirits, with no other object than the result of bewildering, misleading, and very often injuring others. Sorcery, or *black magic*, is an almost forgotten art in the Western world, and the volumes which, to some extent, unfolded its mysteries, have for the most part perished in the conflagrations which destroyed the libraries at Alexandria, and other places.

Those uninstructed persons who write of sorcery as if it included such gifts as Jesus of Nazareth and his followers possessed, clairvoyance, or spiritual sight, clairaudience, or spiritual hearing, healing, inspiration, and the removal of obsession, have everything to learn. Their education leaves off just where it should begin, and the modern Pharisaism which declines to recognise or to study the steady growth of many of these pure gifts among the people, is part of that materialism which naturally and inevitably reaches its culmination

in the so-called positivist, and sceptic, who believes in physical matter and nothing else.

Whatever phenomena may have taken place, through the agency of Simon, they were speedily eclipsed by the pure manifestations of Philip, leading to a holy end, and a large number of the Samaritans were convinced by his discourses.

The news of his success brought Peter and John from their place of retirement in Jerusalem, and through the unusually concentrated power around them,—for it must be remembered that these men were a handful fighting everywhere with scepticism, that there were no books, and no journals, and nothing that could keep the truth alive but their personal efforts—many received a large portion of the same gifts and capacities as they possessed themselves.

The hand is an instrument of extraordinary power, in close connection with the brain; from it often flows a most potent influence; directed by the will, it can heal, mesmerise, entrance, become the medium of an agency for holy spirits. Simon coveted this ability to develop others. He looked upon it as a marketable commodity, such as his own performances. Peter told him that he was utterly incapacitated for work so sacred as theirs. What connection had common charms, love-spells, love-potions, and similar follies, with eternal truth? All men have a right to obtain means to live; these early teachers themselves received the means of others. But the sale of a sacred influence for such ends as those with which Simon was familiar, was alien to every purpose they had in view. On seeing the opinion Peter held of his actions and his character, Simon expressed his sorrow. He had not realised the grandeur of such a mission as theirs.

After actively aiding Philip and visiting several Samaritan villages, Peter and John returned again to Jerusalem.

The second instance, and one in which Philip was successful, concerned the influential treasurer of Candace,

an Ethiopian, and a wealthy man, but one of that unfortunate class which has been the curse and the shame of Oriental life, who was deprived of the central force of manhood, and the ability to become a father. With regard to questions of sex, it seems, indeed, as if the world had suffered from a species of insanity, on the one hand, destroying itself by common vice; on the other, afflicting itself with the paralysis of celibacy and asceticism. The greatness of the true life it has never seen.

Philip had been directed to travel on a desert road towards the city of Gaza, and it was while he was traversing it, that he met the Ethiopian with his retinue. A spirit, one of those who were directing him, told him to go towards the chariot. He did so, and seeing its owner engaged in reading the writings of Isaiah, he asked him if he understood the real meaning of the verses. The Ethiopian said he could not understand them without explanation, and begged Philip to take a seat beside him in the chariot. It was a golden opportunity. Philip saw the roll, and that it was open at the passage referring to one who was

“led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth:
In his humiliation he was taken from judgment;
His generation who shall declare?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

The Ethiopian, who was no doubt a proselyte of the Gate, wondered whether the prophet had spoken of himself, or of some other person. Philip immediately informed him the real fulfilment of these words in Jesus of Nazareth.

All students of the Bible and of ancient history are aware that the “Messianic prophecies” generally referred to current events. This fact has been offered as a reason for ridiculing the constant references to the prophets made by these first teachers with regard to the

Nazarene. But it must be remembered that all the writings of the prophets were considered by the Jews to refer to the final deliverance of their nation, and the triumph of a coming king. From that point of view alone, the connection of these ideas with the life of Jesus was essential. But there is another consideration, which sceptical writers entirely overlook. These old writings were given under the influx of inspiration, and a person thus influenced, will speak and write wiser than he knows. Concerned as they apparently were with the history of the hour, there was also an undercurrent of thought which shaped out the work of the future. The idea of the Messiah was purposely infused into the national thought of Jewish life; the realisation was the completion of that design. So extravagant were the views of the Jews with regard to their approaching victorious career, at the time of the appearance of the unrecognised Jesus, that they tinged the belief even of the early Christians, and made them look for his reappearance, and *their* victory, in a way, and in a sense which was very far removed from his own desires, or the necessities and possibilities of the age. Centuries were required to teach men that "the new Jerusalem" was the symbol of a more perfect, and a gradually acquired condition, and mistaken ideas with regard to some sudden and palpable appearance of glory upon the earth still linger in the minds of many persons who profess to believe in him who said "the kingdom of God is within you," and that the glory to which all other things should be added, was the silent glory of the spirit winged with victory at last over material things.

Baptism had become a custom in the society at Jerusalem, and so far it was a sign of union with it, and was not yet a dead ceremony. In response to the request of the Ethiopian, Philip baptised him, and then follows a singular account of his transition to another place. He was entranced, and conveyed in a moment to a place called Azotus, where he went on with his

work, finally reaching Cæsarea, a town at which he long resided. Under certain conditions, of a rare kind, the sudden transition of an individual from place to place by spirit power is possible. The person may stand in one spot, and awake to find himself in another, miles away, hardly knowing how he got there. Instances similar to this have occurred in ancient and modern times, but they occur according to fixed laws. Such a sudden mode of transition was never possible to Paul, although it would have saved him many long and weary journeys. He did not possess the conditions, and in his case spiritual power ran less in phenomena than in the greater one of inspiration. It is a rare event even in the person who can thus be acted upon by spiritual agency, and is only spoken of once even in the case of Philip. Those who desire to study the powers and limitations of spirits in their influence upon human beings or material objects, should read the literature, and converse with the persons alone capable of throwing light on such incidents as these.

Next to this brief history of Philip, and the first efforts among Gentile audiences, follows that story which of all others proves the reality of all these records, and sets the seal of truth upon every page.

It is the story of the persecutor Saul, the man who had voted for the execution of Stephen, and who had done his utmost to destroy the society in Jerusalem. The companions of Jesus who sought to present their evidence to the people with regard to his reappearance after crucifixion, were deeply attached to the Master, and firmly and fully believed in him. They had come under what we may term his strong and pure psychological sway. As such, their evidence, forcible as it was, was imperfect. Not only did the work require a man liberated from Judaism, for the sake of the Gentiles; but it demanded a witness who had been publicly known as an intolerant sceptic. Jesus saw that the man Saul could be bent to this purpose. The same fire which had made him a bigot who would not rest until he had

caught and punished all the heretics, would inflame him to work for the truth as no other man would when he once knew it. Such an one was needed—needed to keep it alive! For in Palestine it would have perished amid the Judaism which dominated more or less the whole land. Outside there was the darkness of Greece in her closing days, and Rome in the decline of her strength. As far as the unseen world was concerned, and a system of morals which would ensure spiritual development, and peace, and true progress, there was no light, no warmth, no comfort. “I have need to be all on fire,” said the noble-hearted Lloyd Garrison, in his crusade against slavery, “for I have *mountains of ice to melt!*” There were mountains of ice to melt before this heroic life-story of the Man, and Saul would be the fire! Who would have invented such a history as that of this man? His sudden conviction; his invariable testimony; his sufferings; his own experience of persecution; his letters, all breathe reality in every detail.

Surrounded by earth-bound spirits who held him to their purpose notwithstanding the inner voice of a conscience far from dead, Saul, who had heard that the new heresy had spread to Damascus, obtained the authority of the high-priest at Jerusalem to arrest any of these Jewish believers in the Nazarene, or the “Way,”¹ as the faith was beautifully called, and bring them for trial to the Sanhedrin.

As he travelled with all speed on the road to the foreign city, he felt the shame of his errand fall like a shadow over his mind more than once, and this incited the evil ones to spur him on all the more in his cruel designs. He drove the feeling away with an impatient curse. But there was one, surrounded with an angel-band who saw him, saw the influences around him, saw the development to which his nature could attain, and this was Jesus, who was guiding the progress of

¹ The Way of Life.

his own work. He determined to speak to Saul himself. Suddenly he appeared to that eager mortal on the lonely road amid a light so brilliant that it terrified the entire company. If men could see the splendour in which the higher spirits are arrayed they would call them gods; with hair and countenances surrounded by a flame, and a sphere dazzling as the very sun, in comparison with forms of physical flesh and blood, they seem almost to represent the infinite and the divine. Rare is the occasion on which they are seen—and when they manifest themselves it is for an exalted purpose.

Overcome by the power, and blinded by the vision, the amazed Saul fell down upon the ground. Before he had time even to think, or to wonder, he heard a penetrating voice say — “Saul! Saul! why do you persecute *me*?”

“Persecute *him*”—this radiant being? How could he? Who was it who spoke to him? “Who are you?” he asked in terms of deep respect. The answer came, not — “I was Jesus, and am now God, the second person in the Trinity;” but, “*I am Jesus of Nazareth*,—whom thou persecutest! Rise! enter the city, and thou shalt be told what to do.”

This was all,—and this was enough. His men remained speechless, having heard the voice, but having been unable to see the speaker, but Saul had both heard and seen as well. What had he been doing in his madness! So this,—this glorious angel was Jesus of Nazareth! No wonder that in one of his letters he said he “had seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the Christ.” Blinded with the light he rose from the earth, and was led into Damascus by the men who were to have aided him in arresting the Nazarenes. His sight was never the same after this contact with an unearthly radiance, and it is not difficult to recognise that this is what became his “thorn in the flesh.” For three days after his arrival in Damascus he was unable

to see at all, and experienced such a revulsion of feeling and condition that he could neither eat nor drink.

Among the converts in the city was a man called Ananias, who possessed the gift of inner vision. Jesus appeared to him, and communicated with him according to his usual method—veiling his real condition, and quietly giving directions, as was his custom at this period. He was in the habit of speaking to many of his followers, and they fully recognised his voice, and his strong and pure sphere. If ever anyone set the example of communicating with mortals on earth, of aiding them, guiding them, strengthening them by his presence, drawing forth and perfecting their interior power, that being was the Man of Nazareth. It was the first work in the direction of tearing asunder in safety, and for a great purpose, that thick veil which separates the two worlds, and under his guidance, it will one day altogether be removed.

He told Ananias to go to a certain house, in a certain street, and there enquire for a man of Tarsus, called Saul, who had seen him in a vision and would expect him. Ananias expressed his doubts. He had heard too much of Saul of Tarsus, and Damascus itself had become a shelter for the refugees from Jerusalem.

“Go!” said Jesus. “I have chosen him; he is to carry on the work among the Gentiles, and for its sake he will appear even before kings; and I shall myself show him that he must suffer and endure many things for my sake.”

This convinced Ananias, and with a faith that was as beautiful, as it had been often tried, he went to the notorious and dreaded man of Tarsus, whom he found in the place directed, and addressed him as “brother.” How strange must it have seemed to Saul to hear that the same Jesus he had seen had known of his prayers, had told this convert to come and help him, and had shown himself to that convert during his journey to the city! He felt a new power unfold itself in him,—

filling him with an inspired wisdom he had never known in all his studies with Gamaliel, or in the schools of the Pharisees. His sight was to a large extent restored, and he was able to eat, and received the mark of union with the new brotherhood in the simple ceremony of baptism.

According to his own letter of a subsequent date to the society at Galatia, Saul withdrew almost immediately into Arabia, and there, secluded from all intercourse with human beings, even with those of the same faith, underwent a silent preparation for the work, which at the required time would call him forth from his obscurity. He speaks himself of three years, and if so long a period passed, even this hardly sufficed to remove the suspicions of a large number of the companions and followers of Jesus. His inaction as a well-known persecutor, and his silence did not suffice to prove his sincerity, and when at last the hour came for his public mission he must have suffered much from the coldness and doubts of the established societies. Each of our actions arises to face us sooner or later; the evil deed brings its consequences, even when we are most eager for all that is good. One of the things which hurt Saul most deeply was, that his former zeal in persecution, and his vote for the execution of the loved and inspired Stephen, was thrown in his teeth by those who opposed his views of the necessities of a work meant for Gentiles as well as Jews. It caused him anguish and remorse, and in his first efforts for the truth, no less a power than that of Jesus himself could ever have led him to victory. None could have foretold that he would shine like a star amid all these apostles and converts, with the word "Liberty" written upon his brow, and the great inspiration of immortality which fell upon none other, upon his lips. The very cruelties of many of those who should have been his brothers in the cause, forced him to other places, and to other lands. Even his ignorant sin only threw out at last the glory and the

heroism of a life that held within it more martyrdom than was faced by any of his fellows. The mere change which had come over the man ought to have endeared him to every true soul, — but his flaming words for liberty, those of all others which Christ most desired should be spoken, — aroused far and wide the opposition alike of mortals and of spirits.

CHAPTER IV.

PETER'S LESSON AND PAUL'S WORK.

SOME six years had now elapsed since Jesus had returned to his own sphere, and during that period the warfare in his behalf had been carried on almost wholly among the Jews. Many had become converts, among the less influential portions of society, but they held on with an iron grip to the "customs of Moses." The Jewish "Nazarene," "the Galilæan" as he would be called, considered the old rites sacred, although informed with new meaning. They were an insuperable barrier to the knowledge of the principles meant alike for Jew and Gentile. The hour of Saul had come. And, led by the spirit, he reappeared, only too well remembered, in Damascus itself, and was at once recognised.

Faithful to his conviction, and as eager to labour for the sake of the truth as he had been to crush it, he went at once into the synagogues, and publicly declared that Jesus was indeed a "son of God." Naturally, it excited no small sensation. Many exclaimed, "Why this is the very man who, a short time ago, was on his way from Jerusalem to arrest the Nazarenes. What is the meaning of it?"

These doubts only increased the power of the new convert. He succeeded — fatal victory! — in silencing the Jews of Damascus in his discourses on Jesus as their Christ.

In other ways he must also have said what at once aroused the fiercest indignation. Ananias, and other converts, were tolerated. They respected the observances of the ceremonial law, falsely associated with the

name of Moses. But Saul went far beyond them. He was an arch-heretic, and an infidel. A conspiracy was formed to assassinate him, and so strong was the feeling, that even the gates of the city were watched day and night to prevent any chance of his escape. To save his life, some of his friends lowered him down the outside wall of a house in a basket, and he got away at the hour of midnight, in safety.

He then went to Jerusalem, where the society had remained for a time in comparative peace. This peace, however, was due to no sympathy for the adherents of the Nazarene, but to far different causes. The Jews were absorbed at Alexandria and in Jerusalem itself, in strenuous efforts to prevent the erection of the statues of the emperor Gaius (Caligula) in their synagogues, and even in the great Temple itself, as a representative of Jupiter. Their disappointment over this successor of Tiberius Cæsar, who had died in 37 A.D., had been the more bitter because he was an intimate friend of the ruler of their nation, Herod Agrippa, who had been released from prison, and restored to authority. And so engrossed were they with the troubles consequent on his brief reign, that they almost forgot the Nazarenes. Not until the reign of Claudius had they time to consider once more the vexed question of the heretical sect, which had been occupied with other and very important questions of its own.

How it was Saul ventured into the city of the high-priest who had given him his commission to arrest the followers of the Nazarene, can, at first, hardly be understood. His intense desire to see Peter, and obtain recognition from him and his companions probably induced him to take this bold step; the impossibility, also, of remaining longer inactive; and the impossibility of ever again living in the sphere of his old associates. He was received with great coldness and distrust, and if it had not been for the appeal of Barnabas, who told them that he had already shown great courage in teaching the new faith, Saul would have failed to convince them

of the truth of his mission. He saw James, and was offered shelter by Peter, but the others could not so readily forget the martyrdom of Stephen. Nor did Saul. In the very synagogues where his eloquent voice had first been heard, and was now forever hushed, Saul himself appealed with the same fire, and a freedom as great as that of the man he had so bitterly opposed. Earnestly did the deeply-repentant man pray for strength in the Temple where the earliest gatherings of the followers of Jesus had taken place, and where they now met no more. His prayers were answered. While he was there, he became entranced and beheld the strong and beautiful countenance of the Man of Nazareth, who again spoke to him and gave counsel himself.

"Leave the city at once," he said, "for they will not receive your testimony of me."

With a full heart Saul replied, "They know how I imprisoned and beat those who followed you, in every synagogue, and how, at the death of Stephen, I consented to it, and even looked on and aided his murderers!"

The scene haunted him, and it seemed to him as if the blood of the poor young Hellenist cried to him from the ground.

Jesus read his inmost soul, and knew that his very grief would fire him all the more with the truth. His troubles would force him into the right pathway. At Jerusalem he was not wanted, and he could not stay. Without a word of comment on his errors of the past, for which the sufferings to come, he knew, would more than atone in their effect on his spirit, Jesus only said, "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Truly did the warning come. His life was in danger, and the little company of the "Galilæans" had to lead him away to Cæsarea, and advise him for the time to remain quietly at Tarsus. Occupied as the Jews were with their own affairs, the storm speedily subsided, and

Saul had once more a brief rest before the great battle of his life began.

Peter visited many places, and accomplished much good, both as regards explanation of the truth and healing the sick. It is stated that he cured Æneas, who had been paralysed for several years at Lydda, and that he restored to life an active and charitable woman called Dorcas, who lived at Joppa. The narrative speaks of her death, but it is very possible that her condition may have been similar to that of which Jesus said that "it was *not* death, but sleep," or a species of trance, induced by extreme weakness, during which, although linked to it, the spirit might be long absent from the body.

While at Joppa, Peter was large-hearted enough to lodge with a tanner, whose trade was held in detestation by strict observers of the Oral Law, owing to its connection with the carcasses of animals. During his residence there, he received another lesson, and one which was invaluable, and necessary for the recognition of Saul, and the interests of freedom.

Some thirty miles distance to the north, on the same coast, at Cæsarea, lived the centurion Cornelius, a man of high character, who spent much of his time in charitable work and prayer. The influences around him were pure; he drew towards him enlightened and holy spirits who designed not only to teach him, but to use him to teach others, and he was marked by those who foresaw the first struggles for the Christ-spirit of liberty, and who desired, not merely, that the great mission of Jesus of Nazareth should be acknowledged, but that it should be recognised as *superseding* the ecclesiasticism of the past. A vision of one of these spirits appeared to him, one so bright and beautiful, that Cornelius addressed him, like Saul of Tarsus addressed and ever after styled Jesus, as "lord." It was a term of reverence, and forms no sort of ground for that deification of Christ which has almost destroyed the truth, and which has been abhorrent to all the principles he rep-

resented. He was bidden by this messenger from a higher sphere, to send for "one Simon surnamed Peter, who lodged at Joppa, on the sea-coast," and without doubt or question, Cornelius followed the instructions.

As his servants were on their way to Joppa, and while Peter was engaged in his midday devotions on the flat roof of the house in which he lived, the same spirit approached him, threw him into a trance, and showed him a symbolic vision of the deepest import.

One of the strongest prejudices known to the Jew was his firm belief in the Mosaic injunctions respecting clean and unclean things, including food, ceremonial pollutions, and association with the uncircumcised. The words and actions of Jesus had plainly taught that this external "uncleanness" was of no importance, but his closest followers had failed to apprehend many of his lessons.

Peter beheld in his vision a sheet descending from the skies, containing all sorts of living animals and birds. A voice said to him "take some of these for your food." He replied, addressing in Eastern fashion, like Cornelius, the spirit as "lord," that he could not alter his custom of refusing food which was common or unclean. The voice said to him very earnestly, "What God has cleansed is neither common nor unclean!" Three times he saw this strange spectacle of the various animals mingled together on the descending sheet, and then it vanished, and Peter was left to think of it, and wonder what the meaning really was. He was not long allowed to remain in doubt. In a short time the messengers of Cornelius arrived at the house, and asked for him by name. The spirit immediately spoke to him, and told him to go down and speak to them. "Go with them," he said, "do not doubt; for I have sent them."

It may here be remarked that this is another of the very clearest instances of spirit-communication, and of intercourse between the seen and the unseen worlds. Not only did Jesus himself communicate with his companions on earth, but many spirits who belonged to

that "legion" which he had so well realised, and who were now actively engaged in influencing those who were convinced of the truth. It was a *spirit* Cornelius saw, like a man; it was a spirit who gave him the vision; it was a spirit who spoke with a voice and human language to Peter, and who threw him into a trance. The word "holy spirit" or "ghost," should really be written "spirit-influence;" it was the powerful influence of advanced, and pure, and holy spirits. Nor in saying this need we forget the divine breath in the human soul. What light does not this throw on every page of the New Testament, now sealed to the multitude and wrapped in mystery, because the people have been taught to believe in a Trinity of "three persons," and have been scared out of all real belief in an unseen world by the absurd and ignorant cry of "witchcraft," or "superstition"! The church of Rome has indeed preserved the idea of inter-communion, notwithstanding her collection of many apocryphal histories, which, like the stories of Macarius, and other hermit saints, it is impossible to believe. But the spirits who have manifested themselves to many of her members have been those attached to her organisation, and who have been connected with it in their earthly lives. Such spirits as surrounded Jesus and his companions could never have approached or attempted to teach persons who were under the direction of human beings designated as priests and popes. Instead they influenced and taught the men and women she persecuted, and it was with the direct object of the restoration of the old inter-communion between spirits and mortals and the manifestations of truth in its freedom, that Luther was guided to separate from the Roman church, and to initiate that movement which has made free thought, free humanitarianism, free science, and free spirit-communication possible on this earth.

Full of trust in the guides around him, Peter saw the messengers, and told them he was the person they

sought. He felt impressed that there was no cause for fear, and that he was in no personal danger, and, after the delivery of their message, he invited them to remain with him during the night. Cornelius was well known and widely respected among the Jews, and Peter felt that he must go to him. Although he was a Gentile, and one who was alike a non-observer of Jewish customs, and ignorant of the mission of Jesus, he, also, had received a visit from a holy spirit, and the very same spirit who had come to him! It was a silent testimony not only in behalf of liberty, but human equality. Cornelius was an upright man, in whose soul the love of God and his fellows breathed. As such, he was "not far from the kingdom of God."

On the following day the whole party travelled to Cæsarea, where Cornelius and many of his friends were awaiting them. He received Peter with an expression of deep respect, which drew forth from the apostle the sensible protest that "he also was a man." It is to be deplored that this fact has been so utterly forgotten in the churches, whose practical polytheism has resulted in the inspired words of men, on whom their age, their circumstances, their own organisations, exercised the most varied influences, being received as the infallible "words of God," whatever these may mean, and being abused in that worst of abuse, the worship of chapter and verse.

The position of the Gentile in this world-wide work of the Nazarene, seemed at last to dawn, to some extent, on the mind of Peter. After talking with Cornelius, he said to his friends, "You are aware how impossible it has been for a Jew to associate intimately with those of foreign nations; yet it has been shown to me that I must call no man common nor unclean, and, in consequence, without offering any objection, I came here. What is your purpose in sending for me?"

Cornelius told him the story of his vision of the man in "bright apparel," and how he had been directed to

send for him. He added that he had done his duty in coming, and that they all wished to learn what he had been teaching so many others.

Peter exclaimed, "I see, indeed, that God is no respecter of persons; but that those, to whatever nation they may belong, who act rightly, are acceptable to Him." Then he unfolded the life of Jesus; how he and his companions had witnessed all he taught and did, and how, at last he had been crucified. Then, how he had reappeared to them, and had even taken food with them after this crucifixion, and had charged them to teach the people that the truth he represented weighed in the balances both the living and the dead. All this had been foretold by the prophets, and those who followed him would indeed attain a righteous life.

As he spoke, great spirit-influence fell on the whole of the little company, both Jews and Gentiles, to the deep surprise of some companions of Peter who had accompanied him, and who were strict adherents of the rite of circumcision. Some spoke in foreign languages; some were entranced. Peter at once asked if any person could refuse the baptism of water to them after they had received such a baptism as this? Accordingly they were all baptized, and received that one sign possible to Gentile converts, of connection with the brotherhood. It had become a custom, this was all, and was not yet regarded in the light of a superstition, or an "essential to salvation." The baptism of the spirit indeed preceded the baptism of water, and its light had fallen upon them without the ceremony. And these Gentiles who had received it, had been brought up in the worship of a variety of gods, were in the habit of eating unclean meats, had never been circumcised, and were ignorant and indifferent about the various ordinances which all true Jews held sacred. The "man in bright apparel" must have been a very heretical spirit. The land in which he dwelt must have been circled by the breath of a greater liberty than is known on earth. And before Peter could relate this

grand event in his history, one which was qualified to, but did not, send him forth with the eagle-wings of power to every man and woman who would listen to him, in whatever land, he was reprimanded in Jerusalem by his fellow-workers for visiting uncircumcised men and eating with them. He told them everything, — how “the spirit bade him go with them, making no distinction,” nor did it at that time occur to any one to say that it was very wrong to listen to such a spirit. For, at that period, no councils existed to settle infallible creeds and the nature of heresy, and there was no infallible mouth-piece of the spirit-world.

Peter thought that the result spoke for itself, and so did his companions. Strange as it seemed, they were compelled to acknowledge that God had at all events shown the way of life to these foreigners and aliens. Had this lesson been fully learned and accepted, the human disputes and arguments of the future would have been avoided, and Peter, rather than Paul, might have lit the world with the light of the Nazarene. But, hero and martyr though he had become, he was not of the same indomitable character as the man of Tarsus. He was liable to be shaken, and, at times, almost overpowered by the influences nearest to him; sometimes he stood like a rock; sometimes he shifted like sand. The very life of the future turned upon the public appearance and efforts of Paul.

The remainder of the record is almost wholly devoted to the accounts of his powerful mission in behalf of freedom; the remainder of the collection of writings known as the New Testament mainly to his strong and earnest letters. The hour had come, and he was the man.

Meanwhile, the societies of the new faith had spread over a large district, and far beyond Palestine. The Hellenists, who had fled from Jerusalem at the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, had spread the truth in the first instance to the Jews in many places in Syria, and finally some of them, who lived at Antioch, began to

address the Gentiles also, and many converts had been made. Greek and Latin were universally spoken, and the dispersion of the Jews had carried the idea of monotheism into the centres of pagan life. Thus Saul had unwittingly been the instrument of laying the foundation-stone of his own work; he had persecuted and scattered, and he was to follow himself and teach. The knowledge of these facts induced the society at Jerusalem to despatch Barnabas to Antioch, and, after he had done what he could, he was impressed to make a search for Saul, who was still silent and unknown, and living quietly in his native city, a place devoted to the manufacture from goats' hair, of ropes and tents. It was in Antioch, therefore, the great Gentile city of the East, that Saul, who became known as Paulus, or Paul, first commenced his work in earnest.

In that city lived Syrians, Greeks, and Romans, as well as a large number of Jews; and it was there that the converts, who had generally been known as the "Galilæans," or "Nazarenes," took the name connected with the Messiahship of Jesus, and were first called "Christians," or the followers of the Christ. The temple of Apollo, and other gods stood within its precincts, together with the Jewish synagogues, and the semi-pagan, semi-oriental character of the place reduced its morality to the very lowest ebb.

While Saul and Barnabas were busily employed at Antioch, one of the converts of Jerusalem, called Agabus, who visited them, was spiritually forewarned of the approaching famine, which occurred during the reign of the emperor Claudius. They had learned to trust the guidance of the spirits round them, and contributions were made which were entrusted to the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who repaired once more to Jerusalem with the fund. They found on their arrival that not only famine, but renewed persecution, had assailed the society. Herod Agrippa, who was very friendly to the Jewish religion, saw that this new sect of the Galilæans was a source of great annoyance to the Jews. In

order to court popularity, like many other self-seeking individuals, who are indifferent to everything except their own personal and momentary interests, he gave orders for the arrest of its leaders. They had long enjoyed an immunity from serious trouble, and its weight fell heavily on them at last. James, the son of Zebedee, was arrested and executed without warning, and Peter was shortly afterwards imprisoned, and closely guarded, to await his trial on the close of the feast of the pass-over.

His companions met together and earnestly prayed for his deliverance, and just when it seemed an impossibility that he could be rescued, their prayers were answered. On the last night of the feast, as Peter was sleeping, chained, and guarded by two soldiers in the prison, the very doors of which were watched, a spirit so beautiful that it was described as an angel, appeared before him, and with the light of another world lit up his dismal cell. Touching the prisoner, he told him to rise, and the unlocked chains fell at the same moment from his wrists. "Wrap your cloak around you," said the strange visitant, "and follow me." Peter obeyed the instructions, almost mechanically, and as if acted upon by some irresistible power. It seemed to him that he must surely be dreaming! This angelic spirit he surely beheld in a vision,—it could not be that such a being could penetrate the recesses of a dungeon, and was really leading him forth! But he followed the vision, and went on, and the gates were opened and closed behind him, and the guards still slept. There was a power which closed their eyes and ears, and held them in that heavy slumber, and in a moment more, Peter, in a bewildered condition was outside the prison, and free.

He stood in the cool night-air, and looked upon the building, and beheld the star-lit sky, and the narrow street. The spirit had left him, and he could ask no question, but he knew it was no dream. He was saved and rescued at the eleventh hour from a cruel fate, and,

eager to rejoin his beloved companions, he fled at once to their dwelling, and showed himself, — a living answer to their prayers.

Accustomed as they all were to manifestations of spirit-power, the death of James had made them fear that the hour of Peter also might have come. The maiden who answered his hasty knock was so startled at his appearance, that she flew back into the house to tell them that Peter had come, leaving him meanwhile outside the door. "You are mad!" they exclaimed, "or must have seen his spirit!" For experience had taught them that the spirit of a living man can manifest itself as palpably as one who has altogether passed out of the body, and all seers are aware of the fact. The continued knocking of Peter brought them to their senses, and in a moment more he was surrounded by the joyful little crowd of friends.

It was impossible for him to remain with them, and, after giving an account of his strange release, and especially requesting that they should inform James, the brother of Jesus, who had probably succeeded his namesake as a leader in their society, he left them, and retired for the time being to a place of safety.

The sensation on the following day was very great, No one knew what had become of Peter, and diligent search was made for him by order of Herod Agrippa. As he could not be found, Herod concluded he had escaped through the connivance or carelessness of the guards, and, after a brief examination, in which nothing was elicited, they were condemned to death. The truth was only known to those who had been sufficiently educated to realise its possibility, and who did not regard it as a miracle, but as a powerful illustration of the control and guidance of spirits with which they were familiar. Since persons who are living in our own day have witnessed objects brought into, or out of, closed rooms, when the evidence has been overwhelming as to the condition of the locked and bolted doors, why is it so incredible to the modern school of sceptical

theologians that a spirit, belonging to the great band which ever watched over and guided these suffering witnesses of immortal truth, should have unlocked the doors of the prison which held Peter? Wherever he was there were conditions enabling spirits to do such things; it was in the stillness of the night, when sleep induced in all the tenants of the jail a negative state, and those who watched were overcome by something they could not resist. A few seconds accomplished the work upon the chains and locks, and the spirit, who would have smiled at human conceptions of "the miracle," with the greatest ease set Peter free.

Herod consoled himself for the loss of this opportunity to obtain popularity, by a visit to Cæsarea, where he amused himself with the celebration of the pagan festivals, and the diversions of the amphitheatre. The towns of Tyre and Sidon had been suffering from famine, and, as they had been on unfriendly terms with the cities of Judæa, their inhabitants sought to make the visit of Herod of service to their interests. The representations made through his chamberlain, induced him to receive the deputation, and, splendidly attired, he entered the theatre and addressed them. The foolish crowd paid him the honours given to a god, and declared his eloquence was absolutely divine. But his triumph, and his ambition, and his love of popularity at all costs, were short-lived. Within a week he died of an illness which showed that the "god" was unquestionably subject to mortal corruptions, and the same people who had flattered him during the festivals, openly rejoiced that his reign was over.

After the release and retirement of Peter, Saul and Barnabas withdrew from Jerusalem, taking with them John Mark, a near relation of the latter. They had all remained in great seclusion during the terrible time of trial under the administration of Herod, and after it was over they renewed their labours, and travelled to Antioch, in Syria, where there were already many converts, and where they hoped for greater security, owing

to the fact that the city was under the rule of imperial legislation. But they had not been there long before they were directed by one of the spirits to separate from the rest, and commence work in a fresh field. The spirit is described as the "holy spirit," or "ghost," and the words, as is so often the case, are printed in capital letters. But the meaning is clear. A *voice* spoke; *words* were uttered; *human language* was used, and it was a living spiritual being of a high order, and, beyond all doubt, an active co-worker with the spiritual centre of all the order above, Jesus of Nazareth.

Saul and Barnabas, and John Mark, accordingly went to the adjacent port of Seleucia, and, guided by the same immortal, sailed to the island of Cyprus. They landed at Salamis, and there commenced teaching the new truths in the Jewish synagogues. This excited the anger of a Jewish soothsayer, who was attached to the household of the Roman pro-consul, Sergius Paulus, and who clearly saw not only that this plain and clearly-enunciated teaching would destroy the mysteries which gave credit to his school, but that he was in danger of being dismissed from a comfortable position. Sergius Paulus had evinced a deep interest in the addresses of Barnabas and Saul. The Jew, known generally by name as Elymas, challenged them to discussion, and endeavoured to misrepresent and contradict all that had been taught to Paulus. As a Jew, he could confidently assure them that this endeavour to show that the crucified Nazarene was the Christ must be absolutely false, since it was acknowledged by the entire nation that such a form of execution was accursed, and could not possibly be the fate of any Messiah. At last Saul, inspired by spirits who saw all the endeavours made against him in public and private, indignantly addressed him as a "son of darkness, and an enemy of a holy cause." "You are blind," said he, "in the spirit, and for a time you will be blind in the body, so that you may know that there is a power which

you cannot withstand." The soothsayer, who had been so eagerly consulted and honoured by the pro-consul, found himself as weak as a child in the hands of those angelic beings who lived in the light, and the event so impressed Sergius Paulus that he became a convert to the new faith.

From this time Saul became permanently known by the Roman name of Paul, or Paulus, since not only was it of use to him in his journeys to the Gentile cities; but it helped to break the association with his past life, in which he was known as Saul of Tarsus,¹ the zealous Pharisee who had endeavoured to exterminate the Nazarenes. After visiting Paphos, another town on the island, the three sailed to Perga, in the district of Pamphylia. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. The reason is not stated; but the probability is he was hardly strong enough to pass at once so completely out of the old grooves, the chief necessity of Paul's career. The spirit had not mentioned him, in his directions, and Barnabas no doubt had arranged that he should accompany them himself, since they had to undergo great fatigue on their travels, and there was much useful practical aid which a young companion like Mark might have given. Paul and Barnabas went on in the interior to Antioch of Pisidia. There they repaired to the synagogue, as the easiest method of making themselves known, and as the slanders against Paul had not yet spread to the Jews of Asia Minor, and his heretical teaching was hardly yet known, he was invited to speak after the readings from the law and the prophets had been given on the sabbath day. They happened, as may be seen by reference to the Jewish lectionary, to have been the first chapter of Deuteronomy, and the first of Isaiah. Paul at once arose, and delivered an eloquent address, in the course of which he referred to the chapters which had been read on Jewish history,—how the nation had been

¹ *Shaul*; in Greek, Saulos, which signified self-assertion, a quality of all others inimical to a work which demanded self-sacrifice.

delivered from oppression, how prophets had been sent to it, how kings had been given in response to the desire of its people, and how Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies, and John had proclaimed his mission in their own day. "The Jews of Jerusalem," he said, "and their rulers, had not recognised him, nor understood the prophecies, which, indeed, they had themselves fulfilled by condemning him. He had, however, appeared again to various persons after his crucifixion, and his work was, in truth, salvation from God. He alone was the one who could not see corruption, — and since David had died, and seen corruption of the body, the psalm pointed to Jesus, and to him alone. He was pure, and could deliver from evil, and those who followed him, and obeyed the higher, and the spiritual law, would attain far more than by obeying the external law of Moses." "Beware," he finally said, "of unbelief, — for it has been foretold that even although all this should be accomplished, the truth would not be accepted, even though it was openly declared!"

The audience was so far not apparently hostile to the new teaching. Both Jews and Gentiles requested him to speak to them on the next sabbath, and several of them even followed Paul and Barnabas to their lodging, and conversed with them privately on the subject. On the following sabbath a large crowd had collected in the synagogue to hear these two speakers who had created such a sensation, and gave Paul a golden opportunity of making known the truth. This excited the jealousy of the Jews, who reflected with bitterness that their own religious views had failed to excite a tithe of the interest manifested in Paul. He was repeatedly interrupted and violently opposed. Paul and Barnabas were at last compelled to tell them, that it was necessary that they should first hear the truth, but that as they despised it, and were indifferent to the knowledge of the attainment of immortal life, they should turn to the Gentiles. For Jesus was intended

to be a light to the Gentiles, and a saviour to the whole world.

The Gentile converts, accustomed to the exclusiveness and religious pride of the Jews were not a little gratified at this announcement, and the new teaching spread over a large part of the city and surrounding neighbourhood. This success, achieved in spite of their efforts to prevent it, deeply enraged the Jews, who used their influence with proselytes of high rank and influence, some of whom were women, and some men, to stir up an active spirit of persecution against the two speakers, and get rid of them out of the city. It is not difficult to imagine the treachery and underhand methods through which this successful conspiracy was carried out. Paul had to face many a mob, and many a scene of strife and cruelty after this, but the private conferences, the urgent secret appeals, the abuse of personal influence, and the whisperings and inuendoes of Antioch, formed an experience which no doubt was almost more distasteful to him.

Nothing further could be accomplished in such an atmosphere, and Paul and Barnabas, strong in the consciousness of their innocence, and fidelity to their work, left Antioch, and visited the not far distant city of Iconium. There they had another painful encounter. After teaching in the Jewish synagogue, and influencing a large number of persons, both Jews and Greeks, they encountered strenuous opposition from those Jews who regarded them as heretics who were undermining and attempting to destroy the faith of their fathers. They did their utmost to excite hostility among the Gentile converts, no doubt representing that these men had been ejected from Antioch, and for selfish objects were endeavouring to upset the peace and comfort of every town into which they entered. The fact that poor Paul "laboured with his own hands," in his native trade of making tent-cloth, and had spent his little all for his cause, unlike his brothers, receiving no assistance from others, was of no consequence. The voice of slander

invariably suppresses the truth and is eager only to send forth its falsehood. For a long time Paul and Barnabas worked hard in the midst of this hot contention, part of the inhabitants being on their side, and part on that of the Jews. But the spirit of persecution rose to such a height among the latter that they conspired with those Gentiles who were in sympathy with them to attack the two men, and stone them to death. Warned of the plot, the two brave but defenceless teachers left Iconium before it was carried into action, and took refuge in the neighbouring towns of Lystra and Derbe. Poor, hapless Paul, the long centuries have done thee justice! What were thy crimes? Thou wert at war with the materialism and self-interest of thy kind, and guilty of proclaiming liberty and immortality! Spirits and mortals were leagued against thee because thou wert infusing life into the valley of the dry bones! To the last hour death and hell will oppose the veiled glory of Immortal Life, and the "Satan" of materialism will arise against it even in the garb of an angel of light.

At Lystra, through the healing power which had been the gift of holy spirits, Paul cured a well-known cripple, who had been lame from his birth. He recognised the power of faith in the man, and the spirits used him as the agent of their strength. The cripple recovered the use of his limbs, and a most unusual sound smote on the ears of the healer and his co-worker. The worship of Zeus prevailed among the inhabitants, and they publicly declared that the gods had become incarnated, that Paul was Hermes, the chief speaker or messenger, and Barnabas, Zeus himself. The priest of Zeus, who was in full accord with the crowd, brought them oxen, and garlands, and would have sacrificed in their honour, had not Barnabas and Paul been quietly informed of their ideas and intentions. They indignantly remonstrated against such a proceeding, the result of the darkness of pagan polytheism, and declared that they were simply human beings, whose very presence among them was for the purpose of "turning them from this

worthless idol-worship to the knowledge of the eternal God, who had indeed permitted the nations of old to believe these follies, although His divine power ever possessed a silent witness in nature." This protest seemed to please the people all the more, until a reaction set in. Some Jews, who had followed the two teachers from Antioch and Iconium, and who were determined to hunt them out of every city and town within their reach, and prevent the heresy from spreading, got hold of a number of persons among the crowd, and persuaded them not only that they were no gods, but that they were two Jewish impostors who ought to be turned out of the town. As for the cripple, such persons could deceive anybody by their tricks or evil arts. The consequence was that the attempted apotheosis of Paul ended in a savage assault. He was assailed with stones, dragged outside the walls, and left in an unconscious condition, and apparently dead. Barnabas, and a few of the converts, however, discovered that he had only fainted, and with their assistance he repaired to, probably, the house of Eunice, whose son he had convinced, and there rested for the night.

On the following day he travelled with Barnabas to Derbe, a town some twenty miles distant. The spirit-power around him had restored him and healed him while he had been asleep, and before it was midday the two had arrived at their new quarters. There, with unabated courage, and a faith which few can appreciate, they again taught the truth to the people. They realised that the martyr-pathway was inevitable, and that every effort in their cause, and all the opposition against it, only developed their own interior life, and brought them nearer to the Chosen One who was guiding them. For a time they enjoyed comparative rest, and, after a sufficient period had elapsed for the storms they had encountered to subside, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, and paid private visits to the convert societies, earnestly entreating them to remain firm in their belief, since earthly sufferings only served

to make the spirit strong, and enabled it to enter into the eternal kingdom.

After travelling to Perga, they visited Attalia, on the coast, and sailed to Antioch, in Syria, to which they returned after having been absent about a year. To the society there they related all their experiences, and how the Gentiles had indeed begun to accept the truth. There, for a while, they enjoyed a well-earned rest.

CHAPTER V.

AMONG THE GENTILES.

THE time of repose, however, did not last very long. Paul had long been busy among the Gentiles, and the contact with them, and the result of his efforts, had both broadened his mind, and in every way confirmed him in the inspired decision to teach in freedom, and to disregard those rites of the Jewish church which had been observed by the followers of Jesus at Jerusalem. He realised not only that Jesus was the Christ, which they fully acknowledged, but that his mission superseded those observances which were only external symbols of interior purity and perfection.

Some persons from Judæa visited Antioch whose views became the theme of a warm discussion. Jews in all but their external recognition of the Nazarene, they declared that the custom of circumcision must be maintained, or there was no salvation. This rite, which had been held sacred by more than one nation of antiquity, had been adhered to by Moses, who, like many other leaders of men, was of his age in some respects, and beyond it in others. His words, and teachings, and laws had been regarded with the usual unreasoning and superstitious reverence which attaches itself to priests, and they had from time to time enlarged his comparatively simple system, until the Levitical law had almost extinguished the early law-giver and deliverer. The mere name of Moses was used as an authority for methods with which he had as little connection as Jesus of Nazareth has had with the ceremonies and liturgy of the Roman church. And since

he had approved of circumcision, circumcision, converts or no converts, must be upheld for all time.

Paul and Barnabas, fresh from contact with a new field of labour, and full of new experiences, opposed these views. For the Gentiles, at all events, this "law of Moses" must be held as obsolete. So fierce and prolonged was the struggle that the society decided that Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by Titus, a Gentile convert, and one or two others should visit Jerusalem that year (44, A.D.), and hear what the first believers advised on the subject. Paul had, indeed, already been told he must go to Jerusalem, by spiritual intimation, and was anxious to see the members of the society there. On their way through the towns of Phœnicia and Samaria, they taught that the truth was intended for, and had been received by, Gentiles as well as Jews, and the converts seemed honourably and honestly glad to hear of their success. When they arrived at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas gave, first of all, a full account of their travels, persecutions, and victories to the friends there, doubtless not forgetting to state that the persecutions had arisen from their own land. Some of the brotherhood, who were still strict Pharisees, and who heard the accounts, said that it was essential to circumcise these Gentiles, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

A consultation was held, in which Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, took a prominent part. Peter, whose own experience had tended to liberate his mind from his first conceptions of the work of Christ, and had prepared him for this crisis, although he never carried the lesson into such active operation as Paul, spoke first. He reminded those who were present that he also had been taught that the Gentiles must hear the truth, and that he had himself addressed them, and seen that they had received inspiration and spiritual development, just as they themselves had, no distinction having been made, for their hearts had been cleansed

by their belief. "Why," said he, "should a yoke be placed on the necks of these converts which has been a burden even on ourselves and our fathers? We believe that *all* will alike share the benefit of the saviour-work of Jesus, the Christ."

The little company listened to this clear statement with deep attention. Peter had been prepared for this conflict of ideas at Cæsarea, and many recalled that various manifestations of spirit power had been given through Paul and Barnabas during their visits to the Gentiles. Then James spoke to them. He reminded them that Simon (Peter) had said that "God would draw a people forth from the Gentiles;" and that the prophets also were in harmony with him. He quoted from Amos in proof of the fact, giving the words a spiritual meaning which may or may not have been known to the consciousness of the seer. "My advice is," said he, "that the Gentiles who become converts should not be troubled by these questions, but that a letter should be sent to them enjoining them only to abstain from pollutions connected with idol-worship, from immoral conduct, from eating food which has been strangled, and blood. As for Moses, his teaching is represented everywhere in the Jewish synagogues, and preachers of his laws are not required."

Thus Paul, who had to bear the real burden of the work of Christ on his own shoulders, obtained the necessary endorsement of his lonely labours from the chief brotherhood at Jerusalem. Theologians have called James a "bishop;" this little conference a "council"; the simple letter of endorsement and advice a "decree." It was common-sense, inspired by wise spirits. Happily, the hour of councils, and the decrees of divines had not yet come.

The mixture of oriental ideas with questions of true morals plainly illustrates the fact that although these early workers were guided by Jesus and angelic spirits, there were many details left to their own judgment.

They were influenced, not in words, but in general conceptions ; not in small daily concerns, but in the great issues and actions of their lives.

After these general decisions in favour of freedom, the society selected two of their number to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch, who could testify to the truth of the statements which would be made by the former, and who would, with them, take a letter from the society itself. The letter is interesting, and translated into modern language, so essential to rid the mind of the "vain repetitions," and misunderstood passages, which are sounded Sunday after Sunday in the ears of innumerable church congregations, runs as follows :—

From the leaders of our society, to our Gentile brothers in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, to whom we offer greeting. As we have heard that certain persons who have gone forth from our midst have been the means of causing you annoyance by their statements, and troubling your minds, without any authority from us, it seemed to us by general agreement the best course to send friends with Barnabas and Paul, who are men we highly esteem, and who have risked their lives for the sake of the cause of the Master, Jesus, the Christ. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who will personally endorse all that we write. For we were impressed and inspired by the holy spirits to lay upon you no greater burden than was absolutely necessary, and the restrictions simply amounted to abstaining from food connected with idol-worship, from blood, and meat which had been killed by strangling, and also from immorality of all kinds, and if these directions are followed, it will be well with you. May you all fare well.

All reforms have to progress by stages. The orientalism was of minor consequence, compared to the freedom from Mosaic ceremonialism, and the withdrawal from all contact with those vices for which the pagan cities were notorious.

The little party travelled to Antioch, and duly delivered the message and the letter, which were received with great satisfaction. Judas Barsabbas and Silas, the

two who had accompanied Paul and Barnabas, and who were also influenced by spiritual power, themselves addressed the converts, and did their best to confirm their freedom, after which they returned again to Jerusalem, leaving Paul, Barnabas, and others at Antioch to carry on their mission.

In the letter of the former to the Galatians, a more detailed account of the events at Antioch is given. Peter seems to have subsequently visited the city, and to have been the cause of some difference of opinion with Paul. He had spoken in behalf of liberty at Jerusalem, and for a time he carried out his convictions in a practical manner, and freely associated, and took his meals with the Gentile converts. After, however, the appearance of some Judaizers from Jerusalem, who claimed the authority, or held up the example of James, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles, in order to avoid giving offence to these and other Pharisees who had attached themselves to James, well known to be a strict Jew, and a supporter of the rite of circumcision and the ceremonial law. The Jewish converts at Antioch at once sided with Peter, and even Barnabas became influenced. Paul, therefore spoke to Peter in plain language, and condemned his conduct, which was certainly neither upright nor consistent with his words at Jerusalem. He publicly told Peter that if he, as a Jew, lived in the Gentile manner, he could not possibly compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews. They had the same right to freedom as he had, and his uncertain conduct had imperilled it for all. What the result was with regard to Peter is not recorded. Great as he was in some respects, courageous, strong, and devoted to his cause, he was far more easily influenced in his words and actions than Paul, and it was not possible that he could ever have represented so fully the principle of liberty which was inherent in the work of Christ. When the Rubicon of his past life was once crossed, Paul never swerved. Throughout every trial, and every species of opposition,

persecution, and treachery, he stood like a rock. Rightly had he been chosen; well was it that he had been called. He alone was strong enough to uphold the great freedom which everybody feared, and everybody shunned. His courage and fidelity kept the struggling truth alive.

That Peter did not resent the rebuke, and that he appreciated the indomitable hold on principle which never moved, and which he had never attained, is manifest in his letter, in which he speaks of "our beloved Paul," and his earnest efforts. There were no small natures, even if there was occasional weakness, among these foremost leaders of the new faith.

The Gentile converts stood firm, and, after a while, Paul felt a longing to revisit those of other cities. He suggested to Barnabas that they should travel to each in turn, and see how they were faring. Barnabas consented, but wished to take with them his cousin, John Mark. To this Paul strongly objected, since he had withdrawn from them, at the very outset of their last journey in Pamphylia, and had been a hindrance rather than a help. A dispute arose of a very human character, and the result was that they separated, and Barnabas went with Mark and sailed to the island of Cyprus, while Paul went his way with Silas, who had most likely visited Antioch with Peter. The two journeyed through Syria and Cilicia, and strengthened and again addressed the societies established there, which probably consisted of not more than a dozen actual members in each at that date. The short-sighted policy which induced Barnabas to desert the companion whose career was destined to be so marked, bore its own fruit. Paul went on, and found many a true friend; and Barnabas, who had thought so much of the prestige of his association with Jerusalem, passed out of sight. Full of the desires and plans of the moment, Barnabas never dreamed that in that desertion he openly relinquished his share — and it might have been a grand share —

in a glorious work. His own receded into silence when Paul's began to breathe with life.¹

The "Gentile apostle" visited, among other places, the only too well-remembered towns of Derbe and Lystra. At the latter place he found his former convert, Timothy, whose mother, Eunice, was a Jewish convert, while his father was a Greek. He seemed to have been highly respected by his fellow-converts, and Paul was impressed to request his companionship with himself and Silas in their travels. Owing to the fact that Eunice was a Jewess, it was necessary for Timothy to accept the rite of circumcision, as, although an uncircumcised Gentile convert might be tolerated, an uncircumcised Jew would have been entirely useless as a worker and a companion. The minds of these early believers in the mission of Jesus had hardly yet learned the needlessness of Mosaic rites for the Gentiles; that they were needless for Jews, it was, so far, almost impossible to teach. However true, it would have been like informing a pious church-member of our own days that rituals, sacraments, and baptisms are of no importance. Some concessions have to be made to human weaknesses, even by those who can walk without leading-strings. Those who believed circumcision to be a sacred duty were honest in their belief; so are those who think they draw near to the Man of Nazareth through the ordinances of earthly churches. They receive no little comfort out of the strength of their own conviction.

Paul's earnest letters to the young man, at a later date show the depth of their friendship, and his great interest in him. He had great need of such help, and Timothy, who was faithful and gentle, was as much a rest to the overtaxed and often-persecuted worker, as the sphere of the home at Bethany had been to Jesus.

¹ Mark was, however, again associated with Paul, and is mentioned by him in his letters to the Colossians, and to Philemon, and to Timothy. It was, no doubt, to this association that were due the elements which formed the basis of the gospel called after his name.

Divines seek to show that Timothy was formally "ordained." There is no evidence whatever for such a ceremony. He had avowed his belief previously, at many times and among many persons, and, before he set out on his journey, Paul and others laid their hands upon his head, and aided him by their concentrated influence. The real "ordination" was the gift of the spirit, and that fell upon the converts, sometimes in contact with the apostles, sometimes as the guiding spirits willed. The church-formality of a bishop's laying his hands on a church-member or a priest, has long been a dead letter. This is stated as the fruit of experience. During the rite of confirmation in the Episcopal Trinitarian church, the writer felt the psychological influences of ordinary church piety; in the rooms of an ordinary house, and in the strong sphere of one guided by angel-presences, the same writer received the illuminating and free gift of the spirit. These experiences teach the soul the deep difference between the ecclesiastical organisations of man and the work of the spirit. It is the difference between the church catechism and the words of Paul on immortality. Fully and completely was it realised by those who had left the worship of Moses to follow in the footsteps of the Nazarene.

Trouble does not seem to have attended the travels of Paul and his companions to these places. The general decision at Jerusalem in behalf of Gentile freedom was delivered to the societies and accepted, and the truth spread. The guiding spirits desired that they should not teach in "Asia;" and when they had reached the province of Mysia, and were thinking of visiting Bithynia, the spirit of Jesus manifested himself, and forbid it. He desired to lead Paul as rapidly as possible to the great centres of pagan life, which were perishing amid materialism of every kind. A corrupted and dead religion, a philosophy which gave no proof of the world of spirit, the daily destruction of the people with cruelties and vice,—all sent their cry to him who

desired that truth, and purity, and immortality should be taught to those who sat in "the shadow of darkness."

What was accomplished in Phrygia and Galatia was of secondary importance to the recorder. Societies were founded, and the letter of Paul to the Galatians points out the character of the teaching. He was clearly shown his pathway. While they were at Troas, Paul saw in the night the vision of a Macedonian, who spoke to him, and earnestly appealed to him to cross over to his country and help them. It must have been the spirit of one who had long lived in Macedonia, who had realised its life, who, on his entrance into the life of the spirit, had been taught truths he had never known on earth, and who was eager that they should be made known in his own country. Many who have never beheld the dawn in their earthly lives recognise the light of the sun in the spiritual world, and there is every reason to conclude that to such a class belonged this spirit, and that he was a living being, and no mere symbolic picture shown to Paul for his guidance. He spoke, and used human language; and a symbol is silent. Nothing can be more plain than the teaching of such an incident. Spiritual intercourse, which has been, is, and will be, of service to humanity, has been, is, and will be, not only permitted but facilitated by the highest powers. Paul, who was often clairvoyant, was accustomed to it, and rightly interpreted that this was a direction for him to teach in Macedonia.

It was at Troas that he is supposed to have met with Luke, a Gentile convert, and a physician, who attached himself to the work, and became the chronicler of the events connected with it.

CHAPTER VI.

CONFLICT, BETRAYALS, AND PERSECUTIONS.

THE history of the efforts of Paul at this time is given by the author as an eye-witness, and he states that they all sailed to the seaport of Neapolis, and from thence went to Philippi, which was an important city, and contained a Roman colony. They had got beyond the region of Jews and universal synagogues at last, and Paul's work began to stand out clear. On the sabbath they went out of the city, and wandered on the river-bank, looking in vain for the accustomed house of prayer. As there was no such building, and only a few Jewish women were found gathered together, they sat down and entered into conversation with them. Among them was a proselyte of Thyatira, called Lydia, who followed the occupation of a dyer of purple, and she was deeply impressed, and gladly accepted the truths unfolded to her. She invited Paul and his friends to stay in her house, and accepted the sign of baptism, together with her household; and her hospitality, which was, no doubt, greatly needed, was gratefully received.

What seemed likely to be a comparatively peaceful field for their labours suddenly became a scene of renewed strife, owing to an unexpected event. As they were about to proceed to their meeting-place, a slave-girl, obsessed by an undeveloped spirit, and whose apparently magical capacity to propound incantations, prepare charms and love-spells, and, at times, foretell certain events, was regarded as a valuable source of trade by her owners, was impelled to follow Paul and his companions, and salute them with a species of

mock-worship, based upon his own earnest declarations. The spirit recognised in his work a power which would interfere with the popularity of the girl among the people, and by publicly attracting attention to him, desired to get him out of the way. There are no more bitter opponents of the designs of the higher spirits than those earth-bound spirits, who may well be described as "in prison," and who are so engrossed in the interests of sects, of individuals, or of positively mischievous causes, that they are unable to understand the nature or the light which falls from the spheres above.

Paul was not a little troubled at the notoriety suddenly thrust upon him. This proclamation of him as a "servant of the most High God," was about as serviceable to his work as the mock homage given to Jesus by the Roman soldiers, or the inscription on the cross above his head declaring him to be "the king of the Jews." It was an abuse of his own words. He had a sacred truth to teach, — one far above the common conceptions of ordinary spirits or mortals, — and he was impressed to approach the girl and bring her within the sphere of that light which radiated around him. Addressing the spirit who spoke through her lips, he said: "In the name of Jesus, the Christ, come out of her!" The result was inevitable. The organism of the girl was penetrated by a pure magnetism, alien to the condition of the spirit, and it at once left her, and was unable to return.

The penalty for performing this humane as well as self-protecting act, of course, speedily followed. The owners of the girl, incensed at discovering she had become a piece of damaged property, and unable to inflict direct retribution, immediately had Paul and Silas arrested on a charge of seditious preaching. They complained that the men were Jews, and were teaching Romans to break their laws, and were a source of danger to the city. With this complaint the crowd generally sympathised. The magistrates, who must have accepted the evidence of the owners of the slave

without question, ordered Paul and Silas to be beaten and imprisoned, and the jailer was directed to keep a strict watch over them. In consequence, the two poor, bruised, and wounded teachers were securely locked within the most gloomy recesses of the prison, and had their feet thrust in the stocks. Their hearts were heavy; tears gathered in their eyes; and they were unable to sleep. Comforting each other as well as they could, they spent the midnight hours in prayers and song. Such sweet sounds had never been heard in those dark dungeon-rooms before, and their fellow-prisoners, accustomed to oaths, and ribaldry, and curses, listened with a feeling of awe to those strange voices.

As they were absorbed in their singing, the sudden shock of an earthquake occurred, and of such a violent nature that it cracked some of the walls of the building, and forced open the doors. The jailer, bewildered, and awakened from heavy slumber, on seeing the open doors, thought that he should have to answer for carelessness or treachery, and drew his sword in order to escape his fate by suicide. Paul at once prevented it, by explaining what it was which had aroused him, and informed him that all the prisoners were present. The man was terribly frightened, and, calling for lights, begged Paul and Silas to help him. In the hour of danger he recognised the strength and calmness of these two prisoners, who were so different from the rest, and felt their innocence. Fear, rather than desire for the truth impelled him to exclaim: "What must I do to be saved?" His whole soul was swept by terror at the thought of his possible condemnation at the hands of the Roman authorities, or a second shock of the earthquake which might overwhelm them all. He could not leave the prison, and he might perish within its walls. Paul at once seized on the opportunity to teach him that there was another salvation for him, which, whatever happened, would deliver him and his. "Believe," said he, "in the truth of Jesus, the Master,

and it will save you, and all your household." And then, amid the dreary surroundings of the prison-chamber, he and Silas explained their mission to them all. The poor, terrified man, listened only too eagerly to this assurance of life in another world, to demonstrate which this Jesus had died. He believed it, and he and his household were so impressed that they received the sign of union with this new brotherhood of believers, and were baptized. Before the hour of dawn had approached, the wounds of Paul and Silas had been tenderly washed and dressed, and food was brought to them in the private apartments of the jailer.

It is unnecessary to suppose that the earthquake differed from any other. It is certain that it was foreseen by the guiding spirits, and that the inevitable imprisonment of the two persecuted men was designed at the right hour, and for a good result.

Whether the magistrates were alarmed at the earthquake, and interpreted it as a sign of the anger of the gods, or whether they repented that they had bent so readily to the pressure of the mob, it is not easy to say. Early in the day they despatched their lictors with an order to liberate the two prisoners. Joyfully did the jailer bring them the message. Paul, however, saw the lictors, and said, with a courage that was inspired: "We have been publicly beaten, without trial or sentence, although we are Romans, and have been thrown into prison. Now, are we to be liberated in secret? No! Let the magistrates come themselves, and bring us out in person."

On hearing that the prisoners were Roman citizens, the lictors took the message to the magistrates, who were greatly alarmed. They repaired to the prison themselves, and begged Paul and Silas to come forth, and go out of the city. The two injured men accepted their freedom, but declined to leave Philippi until they had visited the kind-hearted Lydia, who had been deeply distressed at the cruelties they had undergone.

After comforting her and all their friends, they were impressed to make no further demand for justice, and to leave the place.

Our knowledge of Roman customs shows the fidelity of the history to its time. The Romans were as stern in their method of directing the administration of their laws, as in having them administered. Magistrates and jailers were alike strictly accountable for the discharge of their duties, and as severely dealt with if they failed in them, as prisoners for their crimes. The soldier who stood at his post, because he had not received the command to leave, in the lurid cloud which overcast the doomed village of Pompeii, was a type of the determined, steady adherence to order, which scorned life itself in the common good, and which had made the Romans the masters of "the world."

Paul and Silas made their way through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the capitol of Macedonia, where they again found a Jewish synagogue. There they lodged at the house of a Jew called Jason, and on three successive sabbaths Paul endeavoured to prove from the well-known sacred writings read in the synagogue, that the Messiah was spoken of as being appointed to suffer, and to triumph over the corruption of death, and also that the Jesus whom he had mentioned to them was that Messiah. Some accepted this view, and associated with the new teacher, principally Greeks and proselytes, and a few influential women. But the Jews were incensed at what they considered a shocking heresy from their faith; and, in order to prevent the truth about this "crucified Messiah," which was rapidly spreading among the people, from being preached any more, they incited the lowest of the Thessalonian population to form a mob, and excite the whole city. The house of Jason was surrounded, and the surrender of the two seditious heretics and false teachers demanded. For the time they were compelled to conceal themselves, and, in their absence, Jason him-

self, with some other converts, were seized and taken before the magistrates, as aiders and abettors of treason. It was the same ingenious device which had secured the conviction of Jesus, and such devices have again and again been employed against reformers whom it is impossible to attack in a direct manner. Side-issues are dragged in; false accusations, misrepresentations, *any* charge, in short, so that they may be silenced and got rid of. The spheres of spiritual opposition well know how to choose their instruments of destruction, and carry on their veiled persecutions. The *real* reason is the great issue of liberty, the "heresy"; the assumed one is sedition, or "character," or "self-interest" in the individual, or some false charge or other which is likely to be believed.

Some of the leaders of the mob formally charged the prisoners of a grave offence against the Roman law. "These seditious fanatics who have turned the world upside down, have made their way at last to our city, and Jason has received and aided them. They are all guilty of disobeying the decrees of Cæsar by teaching that there is *another king*,—one Jesus." The magistrates examined into the matter, and speedily discovered that neither Jason nor his friends had any revolutionary intentions. They were shrewd enough even to suspect that it was a religious difficulty; but they liked peace and order to be preserved in the city, and had Paul and Silas been arrested they might have suffered, owing to the caution of the magistrates. They were sent out of the place by their friends the same night. Hardly knowing what to do, but impelled to go on with their efforts, they made their way to the not very distant town of Berœa. There they found again another Jewish synagogue, where, strange to relate, their teaching was received with considerable interest and attention. The sacred writings were carefully examined to ascertain whether Paul indeed was unfolding a great truth, and many were convinced, both Jews and Greeks, and among them persons of influential position.

One of the charges brought against the early Christians in the terrible persecutions at Rome, was that they were ignorant, uneducated persons. Sometimes brains which have never seethed with theological arguments, and the erudite philosophy of the schools, form the clearest receptacles of a God-given truth. The fishermen of Galilee were a hundred times more open to the illuminating teachings of the Master than the haughty scribes of Jerusalem; and, though they knew it not, the science of the whole world, and far more than any of her religions, was centred in the being of Jesus of Nazareth, that "crucified Chrestus" whom they despised.

The very name of Paul had by this time become so notorious as to excite comment in any place where there was a colony of Jews. The news of his fresh efforts at Beroëa, reached those of Thessalonica, and they at once despatched some of their number to the town, stirring up active opposition against him, and no doubt giving a very curious version of the events in their own city. Everywhere the seed was sown, but the poor sower was driven and hunted from place to place, and never beheld the coming flower and fruit. His friends sent Paul away out of the scene of strife to the sea-coast, and Silas and Timothy, who were considered far less dangerous persons, were able to remain. Little is said of Timothy, and he seems to have gone about in comparative safety owing to his services in the cause having been more private than public.

A few persons accompanied Paul, and no doubt sailed with him to Athens. He never seems to have been alone for any length of time, and his weakness of sight, as well as the necessity of his receiving the vital magnetism and sympathy of others,—a condition known to all who are spiritually developed and actively engaged in reforms which strike at the very heart of human prejudice,—furnish ample reasons. After finding a lodging for him at Athens, his friends left him, bearing an urgent message from Paul to Silas and Timothy, re-

questing their immediate company. While he awaited their arrival, he walked quietly about the famous city, whose schools of philosophers and treasures of art were known far and wide. Of the former, he knew next to nothing, and the art he saw, he was unable to understand. He knew enough of pagan worship to realise that statues were placed in the temples connected with the worship, and called by the names of the "gods." To a Jew, educated from his youth to believe that it was wrong to make a "graven image," since such things had always resulted in idolatry among the Israelites, it seemed to him very sad that this beautiful city should be filled with "idols." Those sceptical writers who have criticised the "ignorance" of Paul, should have read the inspired thoughts which swept through his soul on the invisible and eternal Spirit; should have personally realised, as he did, the vices of those pagan temples; and should reflect that the iconoclasts of the fourth century were as inevitable a reaction against the popular polytheism of Greece and Rome, as the early celibate hermits and saints were against their various immoralities. History must be read with a large eye,—one which has marked the rising and falling waves, the ebb and flow of belief, and the mental tendencies of human nature. The very extremes of reaction are a necessary condition of further progress.

The great Acropolis, the Parthenon, the matchless statues of Phidias, the fame of the city of Plato, Demosthenes, Socrates, Pythagoras, Euclid, Xenophon, Herodotus, were all alike shadowed in the soul of Paul, as he thought of the sins which stained the degenerate centuries of Greece, and of the darkness of the people concerning the true God and the immortal life demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth. He could not be longer silent. He repaired to the Jewish synagogue, and addressed those who seemed, at least, to be outwardly devout, and he stood, day after day, in the market-place, or Agora, and reasoned and conversed with those of its frequenters who would listen to him. Among them were

many professors of the Epicurean and Stoic schools of philosophy, who paused to listen to this new lecturer out of a feeling of curiosity. His arguments and reasonings were listened to with the interested yet momentary attention paid to the latest morsel of news from foreign lands, or the last invention of philosophical wisdom. This God, of whom Paul spoke, and this Jesus, who had shown what the true life was, seemed to them very mystical.

"What is this babbler talking about?" asked some of the listeners. "He seems to be teaching some other gods," answered others.

What *was* this new religion? None seemed to know. At last Paul became sufficiently known to gather a crowd around him, and, in order that all should have fair hearing, they led him up to the Areopagus, and requested him to address them in the same way as so many others had been wont, and in the same place. "You are teaching some singular things. Let us know all about it." There was no sort of special respect to Paul in this proceeding. The Athenians, and the many visitors to their schools of learning, spent their time in discoursing and arguing about every new disquisition or theory of which they knew. They heard Paul as they heard others. The singularity of his ideas gave him, for the moment, a curious, although indifferent audience.

Looking upon the temples, and the signs of polytheism which everywhere surrounded him, Paul delivered an address as well adapted as he could make it to those cold and cultured men who stood before him. He told them that he had observed their various proofs of religious devotion, and that among them he had seen an altar on which was engraved the inscription, "To an unknown God." Whether this altar had been erected to the honour of some god, whose name was forgotten or not, is of no consequence. It furnished Paul with a basis for his argument. "The God that is unknown to you," said he, "is the Being of whom I desire to speak, and He is the Creator of the world, and does not dwell

in temples built by the hands of men, neither can they minister to His necessities, for He needs nothing, but imparts and gives everything through His own power, — life and all its forces. All races of men are derived from the same source, and the rising and decay of nations, and their condition, are in accordance with His laws, and they are inspired to recognise a ruling power, and to search after it in many ways, although, in truth, God is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being. Even one of your own poets has said : —

We also are His offspring.

“ Since we, as men, are the offspring of the eternal God, we ought not to suppose that He has any resemblance to forms made of gold, or silver, or stone, and chiselled by human hands. Such ignorance as this has indeed been permitted ; but now He desires that all men should forsake such follies, for the time will come when the world and its creeds will be ‘ weighed in the balances ’ by the man who has been ordained to give it light, and that this man is indeed chosen to represent the truth, and to convince us of it, is shown in his victory over death itself.”

This beautiful and inspired address, wise with a higher wisdom than the schools, and the knowledge that is not of earth, was abruptly interrupted by the audience. The moment they heard Paul say that he could tell them of one who had manifested an immortal life, his voice was silenced with sarcasms and cries of derision. As the crowd dispersed, some loudly expressed their contempt, while others briefly informed Paul that they would hear him on another occasion. It was a polite way of dismissing him and his opinions. Poor Paul ! How little did that nameless crowd know his heroism ! Courage had been almost deified in the old days of Greece. Could they have seen the courage of that martyr-spirit, everywhere rebuffed, and wounded and hunted down, and assailed for the sake of it

glorious truth he bore within his heart, they would have carved a statue of him, and placed it among the "idols." But to them he appeared as a deluded adventurer, who was unknown to any famous men, and whose cause was hopeless in the view of all cultivated persons. Their pride of race, also, which made them call all aliens "barbarians," revolted from the bold assertion of the equality of men before the Eternal One. Intellect without seership and intuition, is like an eagle without wings. The future showed the wisdom of the faith of that despised truth-speaker in the Areopagus, and the folly of his hearers. Two or three alone seemed impressed by his earnestness and the truth of his words, and among them were Dionysius and a woman of whom nothing is known. But the idea of founding a society in the city was useless; and, comforted by unseen presences, and the reflection that at least he had done his best, he left the place which of all others he had hoped and prayed might receive the light, and went, no doubt accompanied by his expected companion, Timotheus, to Corinth.

This city had become a place of active trade, and was frequented by people from all parts of the known world. Vessels and commerce were the causes which thronged its streets with sailors, and Greeks, and Romans, and Orientals mingled together in close association. Its morals were of the lowest order, and so accustomed were its inhabitants to the sphere of impurity, that it was accepted as a part of its common life, and excited no comment. The truly divine and sacred power which resides in the right and harmonious use of the forces of sex, was as unknown to the greatest thinkers among the Greeks as the destruction of the body and wrong committed on the spiritual nature, by its misuse. It is the fire which creates life and light, or slays. And it was in this centre of pagan religions and moral perversion that Paul had to proclaim the truth which was born out of the highest purity.

His work began once more in the Jewish synagogue,

where Jews and Greeks assembled. And he was fortunate enough to find a congenial lodging in the house of a Jew of Pontus, named Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, who followed the same trade as himself, and had been compelled to leave Rome owing to the recent decree of the emperor Claudius, which, for a time, had expelled the Jews from the city. Paul had more than enough to do with his labours in the synagogue, and his weaving of cloth for tents. Timothy, who had returned to Thessalonica, and Silas, who had been left at Berea, again joined him at a time when their presence was urgently required. The spirit threw a fresh influence upon Paul, and he almost exclusively confined his discourses to the arduous effort of proving to the Jews that Jesus was the expected Christ. It excited the invariable violent opposition; and at last Paul said: "Your blood must be on your own heads; at least I am guiltless. From this time I shall address myself to the Gentiles." He therefore left the church which refused all attempts in the direction of reformation, and finding a place in the adjacent house of a proselyte called Titus Justus, who was a devout man, he drew together a little band of followers, who listened to him with interest, were convinced by his arguments, and who received the sign of baptism. Among them was Crispus, the governor of the synagogue, and the members of his household, and they formed a remarkable exception to the general attitude of their fellow-countrymen.

This little gathering was regarded with intense hatred by the Jews, and it was by no means easy to carry it on. But Paul was strengthened by a vision of the Master, who appeared to him one night, and said, "Do not fear; speak the truth, and do not be silenced; and no man shall do you any injury, for there are many who will be convinced in this city." He found the directions were based as before, upon fact, and for a long time, so long, it is said, as "a year and six months," Paul was able to teach the Greeks who listened to him,

notwithstanding minor annoyances and hindrances, in comparative peace.

On the appointment, however, of the new pro-consul of Achaia, Gallio, a brother of the famous Seneca, the Jews took the opportunity of laying a formal complaint before him with regard to Paul, who was seized and brought before the magisterial chair. The prisoner was charged with "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." The religion of the Jews was licensed by the Roman government, and Paul had been teaching what they considered entirely contrary to it, and, therefore, what was unlawful. Gallio, whose extreme mildness of disposition had been counted upon as rendering him pliant to their influence, dismissed the charge as one unworthy of serious consideration. Without paying any attention to Paul, who was about to make a defence of his conduct, he said, "If this complaint was founded on any real crime, punishable by law, I should give it my attention; but if it is only a question of names" (alluding to "the Christ"), "and your own laws, you must deal with it yourselves. I do not intend to mix myself up in such matters." And he sent them from the court.

Throughout the charges made by the Jews to Roman authorities, against the Nazarene and his followers, the Romans had easily seen through their conspiracies. From religious fanaticism they, as a nation, had been remarkably free, and their sympathies were far removed from the oriental zeal of the country they had conquered. It was not until they believed their system of government was seriously endangered owing to the increase of Christian converts, that they commenced systematic persecution, and this was in the first instance in great measure owing to the early treacheries of the Jews, who had spread over so large a part of the empire. The first whispers the Roman authorities heard against the Christians were, that they were an ignorant and fanatical sect of believers in a new king, who was destined to overthrow gods, temples, and

thrones, wherever the delusion was received. Perhaps it was true. But even the truth can be told with such malice that it becomes the worst of slanders.

The Greeks, who were indignant at this attempt to injure Paul, and among whom may have been some over-zealous converts, inflicted on the Jews a summary revenge. They seized on Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in the precincts of the hall itself. The pro-consul, who was aware of the reputation of the Jews for disturbances, offered no sort of interference. The security foretold to Paul by Jesus was thus assured to him. He remained in Corinth for some time longer, unmolested, and then, feeling that his work there had been so far accomplished, and that a society had been founded, he bade his brothers in the cause farewell, and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla, and Aquila, the tent-makers. At the seaport, Cenchreæa, whence they started, Paul, who had taken upon him the vow of the Nazarite, had his hair cut short, in token of its termination. The Nazarites abstained from animal food, all intoxicating liquors, and allowed their hair to grow long. James, the brother of Jesus, was one. They were strict adherents of the law of Moses. A temporary vow, pledged in consequence of some special deliverance from death or danger, or similar reason, was often taken among the Jews. Paul was a Jew by birth and descent, and it must not be supposed that such a vow involved any inconsistency with his recognised principles. He fully believed that Moses had been the first great religious authority of his nation, but he strenuously opposed the idea that Levitical laws were to regulate the lives of Gentile Christians; and he, further, repeatedly taught them that they were fulfilled in, and superseded by, the principles made known in the life of Christ. His temporary vow was a private and personal consideration, and was never referred to by him in either his discourses or his letters.

The hideous custom, subsequently observed by the

early monks of shaving not only their faces, but the central portion of the head is only another illustration of the tendency which exists in human beings to enslave themselves in their very admiration of the most free minds in the world.

At Ephesus, on his way, he entered the synagogue and taught the Jews, who appear for the time to have received his addresses with attention and interest, and requested him to remain with them. He promised to visit them again, and sailed to Cæsarea, from which place he went on to Jerusalem, and "saluted" the old brotherhood there. Not a word is said with regard to any welcome extended to the grandest worker of them all, nor does he seem to have been invited to remain. Many rumours had reached it with regard to the "dangerous" form this work in behalf of the Master, was assuming, and which was entirely due to him. None of its members had ever admitted that the result of the Christ-work would be to sweep away all the old institutions, and it seemed as if Paul had gone into a region they hardly understood, and where they could not follow. The alms he brought in accordance with the agreement made on the close of the discussion with regard to the Gentile converts, hardly sufficed to atone for a feeling of anxiety which influenced, not one, but many of them. They did not recognise that the extraordinary boldness of Paul was inspired; that he spoke because Jesus himself willed it, and filled him with a mighty strength. No man could have so suddenly freed himself from every chain, and faced such sudden mental shocks, and trials of faith, and cruel persecutions, who was not led of the angels. The heroism of every great reformer and martyr has been sustained by the fiery flames of an inspiration which has transformed the leaping tongues of destruction around the very stake, into the light of a continent.

Not desired to remain at Jerusalem either by spirits or mortals, Paul travelled to Antioch, where he rested for a time, and passed on through Galatia and Phrygia,

visiting and strengthening all the societies of converts. Before he returned to Ephesus, an Alexandrian Jew, called Apollos, came to reside there, who was not only deeply versed in the knowledge of the sacred writings, but possessed a remarkable gift of eloquence. He had been a follower of John the Baptist, and had accepted his teaching with regard to a coming religious reformation, and unconsciously addressed the people on the nature of a true Messiah, without knowing that he was speaking of Jesus of Nazareth. Like many other preachers of a more spiritual religion, than that which is the popular one of the hour, he had approached the truth so closely, that its acceptance on being made known to him, was certain. Among his audience were Priscilla and Aquila, who had a private conversation with him, and explained the "way of God," or the true pathway in Jesus, as fully as they could. And, on his visit to Achaia, the converts furnished him with letters of recommendation to the Corinthian society to whom his gifts were of great service. His eloquence for the time, seemed to be more than a match for the opposition of the Jews, and he publicly taught that their own writings proved that Jesus was the Christ.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul arrived at Ephesus, and discovered there a set of persons who seemed to have accepted, like Apollos, the teaching of John. He asked them if they had received the gifts of the spirit (or the influence from the sphere of holy spirits) when they had accepted this belief. They replied that they had not so much as heard whether such gifts were possible.

"Among what class of persons did you receive the sign of baptism?" asked Paul.

They answered, "Those who had followed John."

They had experienced a mere rite, and not the spiritual influence which alone made it either significant or of service.

Paul said that John had, indeed, used baptism as a mark of the necessity of reformation of life, but he had

charged them to believe in the work of one who would arise after he had passed away, and that one was Jesus. In consequence of this they received a fresh confirmation of their union with the brotherhood, and through the influences which radiated from Paul, and around him, acquired the spiritual development which gave them the power of vision, and of speaking in various languages.

For a period of three months, Paul, notwithstanding his old decisions, worked in the synagogue, and endeavoured to unfold that kingdom which was not of earth, but belonged to a divine order. The Jews, as usual, became at last bitterly opposed to him, and publicly refuted all he had taught, using the strong language with which pious zealots have ever endeavoured to destroy the mission and the message of "the prophets who are sent unto them." It was impossible to do anything in a scene of perpetual and violent strife, so Paul engaged the school of a well known disputer called Tyrannus, and, surrounded by the converts, addressed and reasoned with the people daily, for a period of two years. The "school of Tyrannus" became well known, and acquired a fame through the strenuous efforts of Paul, which had been unknown to the tedious reasonings of its philosopher. He also effected many cures of the sick, and handkerchiefs, or portions of articles he had worn, and which were saturated with his pure magnetism, were sought after, and found useful in many cases of disease and obsession. Some wandering Jews, who, like the rest of their nation, had long believed in exorcism through names and certain ceremonies, and who witnessed the success of these methods, began to employ the names of Jesus and Paul as spells. Among them were the sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest of some importance. They were foolish enough to address their "spells" to some poor maniac, for it by no means follows that the statement that he was actually obsessed is correct, although it is no less true that

insane persons are frequently surrounded by, and acted upon by spirits of the lowest kind, who are ready to live in the sphere, when they do not possess the organism, of human beings whose minds are unbalanced, or whose bodies have become diseased. One need not dwell upon the hell of our forefathers, when there are hells all around us. The earth-bound spirit is, of all beings, the most miserable. And the asylum, and the drinking-saloon, and the places of immoral resort, are some of the haunts of those who abused the life which is the gift of God, while in the body.

All the result these men attained through their "spells" was a violent attack made upon them by the enraged lunatic; their clothes were almost torn from their persons, and they were only too glad to escape with their lives. On hearing of this incident, the Ephesians regarded Paul, whose true method they did not understand, with awe, and the name of Jesus as something sacred. The consequence of this was very singular. Some of those who had welcomed the teaching of Paul, still practised all sorts of superstitions, and possessed books treating of magical formulas, incantations, spells, love-potions, and many things, which, although they may have possessed a certain basis of truth, were of a dangerous and even degrading character. Truth is a two-edged sword; rightly used it will hurl back evil, and open a pathway for progress; used amiss it may become an instrument of suicide. Superstitions, the *merely* occult, the sorceries of the East, paled before the manifestation of the interior power of Jesus. Volumes worth many hundreds of pounds passed into smoke in the city of Ephesus, and the bonfire was no loss to humanity. The truth which included all the mysteries of spirit, and illustrated in the most sacred manner its beautiful laws, satisfied and uplifted, and spread among the people.

Amid the many trials to which he alluded in his letters, Paul had achieved no little success, and felt the

time had come for him to work elsewhere. He thought he would go through Macedonia and Achaia, and sail from Corinth, on another and a fifth visit to the beloved centre of his country, — the "holy city." "Then," said he, while discussing his plans with friends, "I must also see Rome."

CHAPTER VII.

"BEFORE RULERS AND KINGS."

THE great teacher was anxious to revisit Jerusalem and recount the good result of all his arduous labours to his more timid brothers. He thought that result would speak for itself, and hardly dreamed, although he foresaw trouble, that the issue would be a long imprisonment. Trials and their consequences are wisely hidden from us. It was the way holy spirits designed of taking him into the heart of the Roman empire, and of keeping him there. And they knew best how to use their chosen instruments, and how to deal with the ignorance, the prejudices, the materialism, and the pride of the mortals of earth.

His wish to visit Rome would indeed be gratified, and a way made for him to accomplish all he desired, but through a trial which would cost him many sighs.

With these expectations, Paul sent Timothy and a convert called Erastus on before him, while he remained at Ephesus. Before he was able to leave, not only was he compelled, for various reasons, to abandon the idea of a visit to Corinth, to whose society he addressed his first lengthy letter, but disturbances arose in Ephesus in which he was himself involved.

The great truths he had taught concerning this new pathway to a higher life had crossed the interests of one who obtained his living through the errors of the popular worship. Ephesus, which was famous for its wealth, its legends of the gods, its men of culture, its arts, and its magnificent temple, was devoted to the worship of Artemis, the impurities connected with which seemed a part of the degenerating pagan life of

the period. When the festival connected with the goddess took place, it was noticed that the interest in it had begun to decline. A silversmith, called Demetrius, who manufactured small silver shrines, and sold them to those who visited the city as a memorial of the temple, saw that his business was rapidly decreasing, and that ruin awaited him. He called all the workmen of his trade together, and, reminding them that their very means of livelihood depended upon the manufacture of shrines, declared that Paul was the cause of their trouble. It was another version of the same feeling which made the owners of the herds in Gadara entreat Jesus to leave their neighbourhood. And similar feelings, whether consciously experienced or not, are at work in our own day whenever truth threatens to withdraw the support of the people from the good old institution which contains within it the elements of death and corruption.

"This Paul," cried Demetrius, sure of the effect of his words upon the poverty-threatened craftsmen, "has perverted multitudes of persons, teaching them that no gods can be made with hands; and not only is our trade in danger of perishing, but even the great temple of our honoured goddess Artemis will be destroyed, and she who is known and acknowledged throughout Asia, and the world will be looked upon with contempt!"

An uproar was at once created, and the workmen, joined by a growing crowd, rushed into the streets, crying, "Great is Diana (Artemis) of the Ephesians!" Had not her image fallen from heaven? Did it not stand within the precincts of yonder glorious church? Such profanation must be stopped.

The mob seized on Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's companions, and rushed into the great theatre of the city, and Paul, who was for the moment concealed through the watchful care of unseen guardians, was prevented by the advice of some influential friends, and by a special message despatched to him by his companions in the theatre, from venturing to show himself. The attempt of Alexander, the Jew, to speak in defence

of the Jews who were opposed to Paul, was stopped by an excited shout in behalf of the goddess. This scene was kept up for some two hours. It ended in the appearance of the chief native official of the city, who authoritatively addressed the crowd, and succeeded at last in quieting the excitement. He told them that "they were all aware that Ephesus was honoured as the preserver of the worship of the great Diana, whose image had fallen from heaven. Since this was the case, it was their duty to be calm, and not to break the law. They had brought into the theatre men who neither robbed temples, nor spoke blasphemously against their goddess, and if Demetrius or his fellow-tradesmen had any charge to prefer against any one, the courts were open to him, and he could make a complaint to the pro-consuls. And if there was any other matter to be settled, it could be done in the regular assembly. They were in danger of being called to account by the Roman authorities for that day's riot, for which there was no legitimate excuse."

The mob was subdued at last. With a general feeling that the official had given them wise advice, they dispersed to their respective dwellings. One sort of self-interest overpowered the other, and the result of Roman displeasure was a more serious consideration than the wealth of the shrine-makers. About the moral consequences of the worship of this great goddess nobody dreamed of saying a word. A corrupted religion is as sacred in the view of the people educated in its belief from childhood, as if it represented all that is good. The prostitution of womanhood sustained in the modern perversions of "Christian doctrine," is held as sacred as if it were not a very blasphemy against the work of the Nazarene!

After this occurrence it was impossible for Paul to remain longer at Ephesus. He called his friends together in private, earnestly addressed them, and then left the city and travelled to Troas. From that town he returned to Macedonia, where he met Titus, who

came with tidings concerning the society at Corinth, and, in all probability, also Timothy, and then he appears to have gone to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroëa, and even as far as Illyricum, and to have occupied part of his leisure time in dictating a second letter to the Corinthians. This tour completed, he then visited Corinth personally, and remained there some three months, during which period it is most likely that he dictated letters to the Galatian society, and also to the converts at Rome, whom he had never seen. Many devoted friends surrounded him, including not only Timothy and Titus, but Tychicus and Trophimus of Ephesus, Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, and Secundus (a convert whose history is unknown), and Sopater, of Beroëa.

At the close of this period, he was about to carry out his purpose of revisiting Jerusalem, and had arranged to sail from Corinth to a Syrian port, when he discovered a plot which had been made by the Jews to murder him, possibly by throwing him overboard from the vessel in which he intended to sail. He had to abandon the voyage, and determined to make his way round by land through Macedonia. On the long and tedious journey his friends accompanied him, and Tychicus and Trophimus seem to have preceded the others to Troas, where they rejoined the latter from Philippi, — a vessel of that period, with one sail, and tacking against a head-wind, might very easily occupy five days in this short voyage, — and at Troas they remained for a week, just after the feast of the passover. There, all the converts gathered together in an upper room, in the dwelling-house, no doubt, of one of their number; and, on the first day of the week, after they had partaken of the meal which was celebrated in memory of the last supper of Jesus, Paul addressed them in a lengthy speech. The room was lit with lamps, and the cooler hours of the night approached. A boy, called Eutychus, who had been sitting in the open window, tired out with the heat, the lateness of the hour, and the pro-

longed arguments, was overcome by sleep, and at last, losing his balance, fell down into the court beneath. In the confusion of the moment it was believed that he was killed; but Paul went down, and, clasping the boy in his arms, told them not to be alarmed, as he still lived. He seems to have speedily recovered from his unconscious condition, and, after Paul had taken a hasty meal, conversed with them for a while, and was about to leave, his friends brought Eutychus back, to their great joy, entirely restored.

This very simple occurrence has been "improved" to youthful minds as a special "judgment" for "sleeping in church." There is not the faintest shadow of reason for such an interpretation of the incident. It was possibly only related because Luke, the writer, happened to have been present and witnessed the scene. Paul seems to have stopped his discourse immediately the accident occurred, and the boy was none the worse. He was, most likely, only present because he had heard so much about this "great teacher," and was anxious to see him, although the whole discourse may have "gone over his head." As for the modern individuals who have "slept in church," considering the tedious repetitions of the lengthy Trinitarian services, and the character of the sermons delivered at the close, it is not to be wondered at that the experience has been soporific in tendency. Who does not recall the Protestant "three-decker" of their childhood,—the clerk and his responses in the little box; the serious curate and the litany in the big box; and the solemn minister in black Geneva gown and white bands, with a "text" and a manuscript of five heads and "lastly," in the tower above? The later developments in fine music, pathetic hymns, shortened prayers, and ten-minute speeches from clerical youths in white surplices, with daring references to "the feast of the blessed Saint Switchem," have kept the more recent Episcopal church-goers awake to note what they shall see and hear next.

On the following day most of Paul's friends sailed to the adjacent port of Assos, while he, no doubt accompanied by one of his companions, went on by land. It was but a walk of twenty miles, and there is a relief and rest in being removed for a time from crowds of human beings which only public workers know. From Assos they all sailed to Mytelene, and past Ephesus to Miletus. His time was growing limited, and he would not visit Ephesus, as he desired to arrive in Jerusalem before the feast of Pentecost took place. At Miletus, however, the vessel remained sufficiently long for him to send to some of the leaders of the Ephesian converts, and request them to come and see him. This they did, and he gave them a parting address which furnishes us with a vivid picture of his condition at that time, his hopes and fears, his faith in heaven and his work, his upright conduct, and his inspired courage.

"You know," said he, "from the first day I set foot in Asia, how I sought to follow the Master in faith, and humility, although I suffered so deeply from the opposition and conspiracies of the Jews; how I never shrank from teaching publicly anything that it seemed a duty to make known, and how I even went from house to house, seeking to induce Jews and Greeks to repent of evil doings of all kinds, to lead better lives, and to believe in the work of Jesus, the Christ. And now, behold, I go, impelled by spiritual influence, to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that the holy spirit tells me that in every city I visit, imprisonments or persecutions await me. But I do not hold even my life dear, or of any value, if I may but accomplish my work, and fulfil the mission which I received from the Master, Jesus, and am able to teach that gospel of divine power and love. I feel, now, that you, among whom I laboured, teaching this kingdom of heaven upon earth, will never see me again. Therefore I desire to remind you this day that I am guiltless of the lives of all men. For I never shrank from declaring the whole of the divine truth. Be wary, all of

you, and especially you who have received the gifts of the spirit, and who are able to teach and to lead those for whom the Master shed his blood, for I know that, after my departure, wolves will enter in among you, who will not spare the flock; and even among yourselves, men will arise who will pervert the truth, and draw away after them those who have believed it! You must indeed watch, for you know how, for the space of three years, I entreated each one of you to remain firm with tears in my eyes. Now, I must leave you to God, and to that divine truth which is able to make you strong, and to enable you to attain the inheritance of life among the holy ones above. I never sought any man's silver, or gold, or possessions. You yourselves know that these hands worked for the necessities of life, and even for those who were my companions. In all things I sought to give you an example in my conduct, so that you also might labor for the weak, and ever remember the words of the Master, Jesus; how he said himself: "It is more blessed to give than to receive!"

These societies which he had planted at the cost of all comfort and ease, and even at the risk of his life, were like children to Paul. He lived a thousand lives in their members; when they were troubled, or assailed, or grew weak, he died a thousand deaths. He spoke, not merely with his lips but from his very soul, and closed his earnest appeal to the Ephesians, by praying on his knees. Such prayers as those were the cry of the earth, which had found voice at last, for light. "O! that it should not fail! that God would keep it alive!" And we may be sure that the one who had been sent to give it, and who had said that he would be among even the two or three who were gathered together in his cause, stood invisible, but with holy power in their midst.

This last farewell overcame the calmness of the poor converts, who felt that henceforth they must fight alone. It was with deep grief that they closed around the strong spirit who had forced open the pathway for

them in freedom, nor would they leave 'until they had seen him on board the ship and sailing far away on the blue horizon, which seemed the gateway of another world.

The vessel proceeded in a straight course to Cos, and then to Rhodes and the port of Patara. There Paul and his friends found another ship bound for Phœnicia, and, going on board, they sailed past a former scene of his work, the island of Cyprus, and went on to Palestine and Tyre, where they remained a few days. At that place, while the ship was unloading, Paul found some converts, who were all spiritually impressed that he must not enter Jerusalem, and earnestly warned him not to do so. So far they were right; but those who guided Paul desired him to trust his fate absolutely in their hands. It did not alter his decision, and after he had spent his time in conversing with the converts at Tyre, they all accompanied him down to the ship, and then, in sight of it, and on the sea-beach, they knelt down and doubtless prayed for his protection. The vessel went on to Ptolemais, a seaport only some hundred miles from the "holy city." After spending a day in that place, and seeing the converts there, they travelled on to Cæsarea, and remained for several days at the house of Philip, the Hellenist, whose own work has been already narrated. He lived with four daughters, unmarried and devoted to him, who were influenced by spiritual power, and able to foresee many coming events. During their stay Agabus, of whose prophetic gift an instance has already been given, paid them a visit, and, passing under the guidance of spiritual influence, took Paul's girdle and tied with it his own feet and hands. He then said: "The angel says, 'In this way shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle, and he will be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.'" This was another confirmation of the clear vision of his friends at Tyre. The little party, including Luke, earnestly begged him not to go to the hostile city. They knew enough of the foresight of their unseen

guardians to rely on what had been said. Of the result of that journey they felt certain. But Paul was unmoved, — as unmoved as was the Nazarene, when he foretold his crucifixion, and Peter exclaimed, "Oh! may this never be!"

"Why," said he, "do you distress yourselves and me? I am ready not only to be imprisoned, but also to *die* for the sake of the Master's work!" Seeing that he was absolutely firm in his resolve, his friends could only say, "Let the Master's will be done!"

The hour of departure came at last. Packing up their little possessions, and the collections of alms from the Gentile societies, Paul, accompanied by his companions and some of the Cæsarean converts, travelled to Jerusalem. With them went Mnason, a Cyprian convert, in whose house in the city it had been arranged that they should lodge. His reception by several of the friends whom he saw on the night of his arrival, seems to have been very cordial. But, on the following day, when he visited James and the leaders, and as they were doubtless considered authorities, in the work at Jerusalem, there is no evidence that he was received with anything approaching to the warmth and appreciation that such heroism as his might, and should, have called forth. He gave an account of his many efforts, and his many trials, and of the grand result of his early firmness in the Gentile cities. They expressed their thanks to God, but immediately proceeded to unfold to him their view of the present necessities of his position, and of the hindrance he might be to the cause in Judæa, if he did not consider the feelings of his fellow-countrymen. With the Gentiles they had not come in contact, and their reception of the truth was a matter of historical narration; their own work among the Jews was a question of the deepest daily interest, and their continued residence in the "holy city" and intercourse with their own people, showed how powerful was the desire of these first disciples of Jesus to convert the heart of Palestine.

Addressing Paul they said plainly to him, "You see, brother, how many *Jews* are accepting the truth, and all who do so are zealous adherents of the Levitical law. They have been informed that you teach not only the Gentiles, but the Jews who live among them, to disregard Moses, to relinquish the circumcision of their children, and to cease the observance of the Jewish customs. What is to be done? They will certainly hear of your arrival. The only thing you can do to refute these charges, is to pay the expenses of four men who are here, and accompany them to the Temple for purification, in order that they may be free from their vows, and able to cut their long hair. Then everyone will know that there is no truth in what has been asserted against you, but that you are yourself an observer of the law. For, you must remember that it was only with regard to the Gentile converts that we gave our advice, and wrote that all that was necessary for them was to abstain from meat offered to idols, from blood and strangled food, as well as from immoral conduct."

This proposal involved just one of those timid concessions to the prejudice of the hour, which was alien to the very soul of Paul. But he was in Jerusalem, in the midst of the stronghold of ecclesiasticism, and he was, by birth, himself a Jew, and not a Gentile. Strong pressure was brought to bear on him, and he felt he might be the means of risking the safety of many others. Therefore, he consented. He accompanied the four Nazarites to the Temple, and paid for the various offerings which had to be made in their behalf by the priest. The vow he had once taken himself had never been characterised by such formality, such publicity, and such narrowness. And the result of the concession was just the reverse of what the apostles had anticipated. So far from exonerating Paul from the charges made against him, it was the direct means of bringing him into violent collision with the Jews, and subjecting him to a fearful scene. It was the will of Jesus himself, who upheld that spirit of liberty

which breathed in his chosen worker for the sake of generations to come, and at all costs.

At this particular time the Jews were in an unusually unsettled condition. Riots and religious disturbances had taken place, which caused great loss of life, and severe retribution on the part of the Roman government. Herod Agrippa had been succeeded by Agrippa II., but the Roman procurator possessed the chief authority, and when Felix was appointed to the procuratorship, he treated the Jews with treachery and cruelty.

When the period of seven days of purification had been almost completed, some Asiatic Jews, who had visited the city to celebrate the Passover, caught sight of the well-known features of the hated heretic, and immediately informed others. The news spread like lightning, and the men themselves seized upon Paul, and eagerly cried out, "Help us, fellow Israelites! This is the man who has been teaching everywhere that our race, and our law, and the Temple are of no importance, and now he has brought Greeks into the Temple itself, and has defiled its holy sanctuary!"

They had previously seen Paul in company with Trophimus, the Ephesian, and imagined that this "Gentile" had been brought into the sacred inner court. Defilement of its precincts was death, and the whole city was speedily in an uproar. The people ran in crowds to the spot, and dragged Paul bodily out of the Temple, the doors of which were instantly shut to avoid further pollution by his blood. He would have been murdered in its very courts but for the vigilance of the Roman soldiers who were on guard in the tower or castle of Antonio, which had been built near the Temple precincts for the express purpose of the suppression of disturbances. As soon as they saw the surging mob beneath, a message was sent to the Roman commander, and Lysias immediately rushed down with a detachment of men into the midst of the crowd. Paul was rescued just in time, and the enraged Jews left off

beating him as the soldiers surrounded their victim, and flung them right and left by force of unsheathed weapons. Lysias ordered his men to bind the arms of Paul, and having thus formally interposed, he requested to know who he was, and what was his offence. Shouts of accusation arose from the crowd, and despairing of obtaining anything like the truth, Lysias ordered his captive to be taken into the tower. The soldiers had to carry him by force up the stairs, owing to the violence and pressure of the mob, who cried, as they had cried before, in the presence of one who was greater than he was: "*Away with him!*"

Just as they reached the top of the stairs Paul succeeded in calling Lysias close to him, and asked in Greek if he might speak a few words to him. Lysias was surprised at his knowledge of this language, and asked "if he was not that Egyptian who had attempted a revolt, and led out four thousand men who were assassins." This attempt at revolt of a "false Messiah" had taken place but a short time before, and a large number of persons had followed him, who were variously killed, imprisoned, or scattered through the efforts of Felix and his soldiers. The "Messiah" himself had escaped. It was but twenty-five years since the crucifixion of the real Christ, and already many of his prophecies were being fulfilled. Clear had been his vision, clear and profound; and the very fanaticism of the Jews was drawing them slowly to that dread hour when Jerusalem would be "hedged in upon every side," and when of that idolised Temple which witnessed the outrage on his most faithful worker, "not one stone should be left upon another." Their religious materialism would receive its death-blow from their own hands.

Paul eagerly explained to Lysias that he was the leader of no sedition. "I am a Jew," said he, "of Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of a well-known city; and I entreat you to give me an opportunity to speak to the people." This was readily granted, for the commander

was not only curious to hear the facts of the case from his prisoner's lips, but he began to suspect that the trouble was really about some petty religious difficulty with which all Romans, in their intercourse with the Jews, had grown so impatient. Paul, who had one of his hands unbound, lifted up his arm in an earnest appeal for silence from the crowd, and standing on the topmost step of the stone stairs, he began to make an earnest appeal in the native tongue.

"Fellow-countrymen and fathers! Listen, I beg of you, to my defence!" The first words in the familiar language calmed the people, and they allowed him to proceed. He said: "I am a Jew, — born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this very city, and educated by Gamaliel, the Rabbi, and instructed in the strictest observances of the Levitical law of our fathers, being as full of religious zeal as you yourselves are on this day; and I persecuted those who believed as I do in the New Way, even to death, arresting and imprisoning both men and women. To this the high-priest can bear testimony, and the counsel of the Sanhedrin, for they furnished me with the commission to Damascus, and I travelled to that place to arrest those who had become converts, and bring them here for trial and punishment. But, as I was in the very act of travelling to Damascus, and had almost reached the place, there suddenly shone on me from the sky a great light at the very hour of noon. And I fell upon the ground, and heard a voice say, 'Saul! why do you persecute me?' And I answered, 'Who art thou?' with fear and reverence. And the voice replied, 'I am *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom thou persecutest!' And those who accompanied me also saw the light, although they did not understand the voice. And I said again with reverence, 'What shall I do?' And I heard the voice say, 'Arise, and go to Damascus, and there it will be shown to you what it is appointed for you to do.' And I could not even see, owing to the dazzling glory of that light, and was led by the hand into the city. When I reached it, one

Ananias, a religious man and observer of the law, who was esteemed by all the Jews who resided in the city, came to me, and told me I should receive my sight. And in that very hour I received it and saw him. And he said to me, ‘You are chosen of God! And you will know His will, and it has been given to you to see Jesus, the Righteous One, and to hear his voice. You will be his witness to all men, and declare what you have seen and heard. Why delay? Come with us, receive the sign of union with us all, and repent of your sins, and call on his name!’ Then afterwards when I returned to Jerusalem, and while I was praying in the temple, I became entranced, and saw Jesus, and heard him say to me, ‘Hasten to leave the place, for they will not receive from you your testimony concerning me.’ And I replied, ‘Master! they themselves know how I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those who believed in you; and how, when the blood of Stephen was shed, who spoke in your behalf, I stood by consenting to it all, and holding the garments of his executioners!’ But he only replied, ‘Go! for I will send you far hence *unto the Gentiles!*’”

This strange and beautiful story, told with all the untaught eloquence of a man who was ready to give his very life in pledge of its truth, and whose every action declared that the vision and the voice of which he spoke were true, was listened to in silence, until he uttered that last sentence. And then what did that crowd say? That the man himself was a living testimony of a power which had changed him from a bigot to a hero, — that his history was the grandest evidence which had ever been offered in behalf of that prophet of Nazareth, — and at least that he should be suffered to remain unmolested, and converse with those who wished to hear more?

No! With one voice they exclaimed, “Away with such a fellow; for *it is not fit that he should live!*”

That *Jesus* should give a message to this man in the

temple, and tell him to work in behalf of the Gentiles, and that the man should say he believed it all, was a collection of blasphemies which were an outrage on their holy place and nation, such as was a very enormity. Yelling with rage they tore their garments and cast dust in the air. Such is bigotry! Such is mental slavery! Such is ignorant, letter-worshipping, pious zeal! And it exists now, and among those very persons who lift up their hands in horror at this persecution of "the blessed Saint Paul." Oh! ye descendants of those Jews of the Temple! Were one to arise within your church and recount such a story as that of Paul, and plead for liberty, you would prosecute that man for heresy, and persecute him from city to city. And were Jesus of Nazareth to stand in one of your lofty cathedral aisles, whose arches are smitten with music and misty with incense, and ring to your holy choirs, you would send the verger to cast him out. Will the lessons of the past never be learnt?

Lysias, who, contrary to his expectations, had understood not a word of the speech of Paul, and who saw that the only result was to enrage the people afresh, immediately gave orders to his men to take him into the tower, and subject him to examination by torture. But, before the scourging began, the poor prisoner demanded of the centurion, who was directing it, whether "it was not unlawful to scourge a Roman citizen who had not been tried?" The centurion at once repaired to Lysias with the intelligence that "the man was a Roman;" and Paul was untied, and taken before the commander of the garrison.

"Is this true?" he asked. "Are you really a Roman citizen?"

"I am," replied Paul. Lysias observed, doubtfully, "I had to pay a large sum to obtain citizenship."

The prisoner did not look as if he was, or ever had been, wealthy. Paul replied that he had possessed it from birth. The order for torture was countermanded. Roman citizens had to be dealt with strictly according

to imperial law; and Lysias began to fear that he had already overstepped it. The following day he made up his mind that it was better that he should be brought before the Sanhedrin, and his offence, whatever it was clearly made known. Paul was therefore speedily arraigned before that ancient version of the "Holy Inquisition," at the head of which sat the high-priest, Ananias.

"Brothers," said he, addressing, in his defence, this venerable and sacred council in terms of equality, which are ill brooked by the "vicegerents of God" and the "custodians" of the "depositories of truth for humanity," "I have lived before God according to a good conscience up to the present day."

The high-priest instantly ordered the officers near him to strike him on the mouth. The insult roused the indignation of Paul, the very courage of whose nature made him despise the cowardly attempt to humiliate him in his defenceless condition. Jesus, also, had momentarily felt something of the same feeling; but he accepted it all as a part of his very work, and had taken refuge in the noble heroism of silence. It is not to be wondered at that indignant words flashed forth from a man who had gone through such experiences as those of Paul. Addressing the person who had given the order, he looked him in the face and said: "God shall smite thee, thou whitewashed wall! Do you sit here to judge me according to the law, while you issue orders to violate it?"

Those near him asked how he presumed to "revile the high-priest of God." Paul replied that he did not know he was the high-priest, and that he knew it was enjoined that none should "speak evil of a ruler of the people." Since the high-priests were so constantly being changed at this period, and sometimes two together possessed a claim to the office, the reply is not very surprising. A man also who was almost always compelled to dictate his letters on subjects he held to be of the deepest importance, and who required com-

panionship to enable him to travel at all, could hardly have had very good sight. It has already been said that this was his chief "thorn in the flesh," and those who have suffered from the condition of their eyes know what this thorn is. Intense and sudden nervous strain, anxiety, trials of all kinds, excessive brain-work, the celibate, wandering life he led of unrest and homelessness, all combined to make what might have been a slight affliction, a serious, and, at times, a cruel one.

Both Sadducees and Pharisees were present, and Paul soon discovered it. From the former class his belief in any proof of immortality would obtain no sympathy, but he knew that the Pharisees acknowledged an unseen world. He had been a Pharisee himself,—a son of Pharisees,—and he suddenly proclaimed the fact, declaring that with regard to the belief in immortality, for which he was being called in question, he was a Pharisee still. For thus his speech should be understood. It would be incredible, and contrary to all the details of his character, that, after facing infuriated mobs, and death, and every species of angry and excited opposition to the freedom he persisted in claiming, that he should have endeavoured to conciliate any body of men by inducing them to think he was a genuine Pharisee. His hope of convincing any of those present, or of obtaining any sort of hearing, lay in the fact that the Pharisees believed in the existence of spirits, while the Sadducees were the materialists of their age. It was a forlorn hope, for "church-spiritualism" is very exclusive, and did not, and does not welcome such influences as inspired either Jesus, or Paul. We know what was said of both. And the temporary discussion between the two classes of persons would have been sure to result in mutual amiable forbearance on both sides. It is the "prophet," the seer, the shaker of the "dry bones," who is hunted down alike by sceptics and Levites. For the moment the Pharisees took the side of Paul on the question of immortality, and to confuse the Sadducees professed to "find no harm in

him." "What if a spirit or an angel *had* spoken to him?" His story might be so far true. The clamour between the two sects at last grew to such a height that Lysias, who was kept informed of the proceedings ordered his soldiers to go down to the Sanhedrin, forcibly take Paul from the presence of the council, and bring him again into the Tower of Antonia, for the sake of common peace and his own safety. The Romans had had so many experiences of oriental fanaticism and its results, that it is hardly surprising that the foundation-stone of future persecutions in Rome, not only of the Jews, but the early Christians, had been laid even at this early date.

There was one who was guiding all these human struggles, and overruling all this human selfishness. On the following night, in the stillness and seclusion of the guarded chamber of the Tower, Jesus appeared and stood by Paul, to whom he spoke.

"Be strong!" he said, "You have testified the truth with regard to my work here at Jerusalem, and you shall witness to it also at Rome!"

It was true. The work had been going on in the teeth of everything. The very mob had but gathered together to hear Paul address it as it was not possible he could have addressed it in any other way, even though it was from the top of those castle-steps which led to a prison. His brothers in the cause, who had been so eager that he should proclaim himself an observer of the law, dwelt in comparative obscurity. He had spoken the truth in the face of all Jerusalem. And perhaps some of that good seed was destined to be scattered long afterwards on fruitful ground.

The rescue of Paul excited some of the Jews to fury. On the following day, upwards of forty bound themselves together by a solemn oath, neither to eat nor drink until they had murdered him. Persecution never fails to go hand in hand with treachery. They conferred with a portion of the Sanhedrin, informed them of their conspiracy, and begged that the council should

request Lysias to bring his prisoner before it with the apparent intention of inquiring more fully into the charges against him, and the moment he was brought out of the Tower, they would pledge themselves to kill him. No doubt some members of that Sanhedrin consented, and there is no question that the plot would have been carried out but for the over-confidence of the conspirators, who probably boasted that they were about to settle the heretic and his heresy forever. A sister of Paul's, who seems to have been a resident in the city, heard of it, and sent her son to the castle with a message to him. He immediately called for one of the centurions and told him the messenger had something of importance to tell the commander. Lysias saw the boy in private, who told him that the Sanhedrin was about to examine into the case of Paul again, for the purpose of delivering him into the hands of some conspirators who had pledged themselves to kill him. Lysias at once saw into the dangerous character of the design. Dismissing the boy with an emphatic command to observe absolute silence, he made rapid counter-plans of his own with a view to suppress a disturbance which he considered might lead to a deadly riot. As soon as it was dark he arranged with two of his centurions that Paul should be taken to Cæsarea with a strong escort of four hundred and seventy soldiers, and delivered to the custody of Felix, the Procurator of Judæa. He wrote a letter to Felix, which they were to deliver to him, and which ran as follows:—

“Claudias Lysias to the most excellent the governor Felix, greeting. The prisoner sent to you, was seized by the Jews, and would have been killed if I had not rescued him by my soldiers, as I learned that he was a Roman citizen. And desiring to ascertain the cause of the accusations against him, I took him down to their Sanhedrin, and found that he was accused with regard to questions of their law, but had no charge brought against him deserving death or imprisonment. And when I was informed that a plot was made against the

man, I decided to send him to you at once, giving notice to his accusers also to appear against him in your presence.”

Lysias omitted to state that he had not known Paul was a Roman citizen until the examination by scourging was about to take place. His prisoner was an inconvenient source of trouble, and he was only too glad to get rid of the responsibility. So the poor captive rode the same night to Antipatris, surrounded by horsemen, and the next day the four hundred foot-soldiers returned to the castle, and he was taken in safety by the mounted guard to Cæsarea, and delivered to the governor, with the letter of Lysias. Felix read the letter, and simply inquired of what province the prisoner was a native. On finding he was a Cilician, he said he would hear the case when his accusers arrived, and the weary Paul was consigned to a guard-room in the palace of Herod, where the Procurator resided. There he was kept until his enemies came from Jerusalem. This they did with all possible speed. On the fifth day the high-priest, Ananias, accompanied by some members of the Sanhedrin, and a professional pleader, who would answer to the modern barrister, called Tertullus, all arrived together, and Paul was placed for trial before the governor.

Tertullus opened the case with an eloquent speech which showed that he was fully alive to the interests of his clients. He commenced by complimenting Felix on his abilities as a governor, and on the good that he had accomplished in preserving order and peace, and earnestly requested him to give his attention to the statement he was about to make. “We have found,” said he, “that this prisoner is a pestilent fellow, and a cause of mobs and turbulence among the Jews all over the world; he is a ringleader of that set known as the Nazarenes, and has endeavoured to profane the Temple. We also had arrested him, but Lysias interfered by force, and took him out of our hands, ordering us to appear before

you. By examining Lysias himself, you will realise the truth of the accusations made against him."

The statement of Tertullus was instantly confirmed by the Jewish priests.

The governor signed to Paul that he might speak, and in the teeth of the hatred and cruelty which surged around him, and which smote upon him like the sharp arrows of a deadly enemy, he told the truth with a courage which was as inspired as his words.

Addressing the Procurator, he stated that he was able to make his defence all the more cheerfully from the fact that he had been so long the governor of Judæa, and would therefore understand that he had only visited Jerusalem to attend the religious feast of Pentecost, which had taken place twelve days before, and that neither in the Temple, nor in the Synagogues, nor anywhere in the city, had his accusers found him stirring up a mob, or even disputing with any man. "Neither," said he, "can they prove to you the charges which they allege against me. My sole offence is this, that I belong to that sect of the new Pathway which they call a heresy, although I worship the God of our fathers, and accept the sacred writings, and believe as they do themselves in a future life for both good and evil men. My belief teaches me to seek to act according to my conscience, and to avoid giving offence at all times either to God or my fellow-creatures. After years of absence I came on a visit to the city with alms for the poor, and while I was there, and was quietly purifying myself in the Temple, without either crowd or tumult around me, some Asiatic Jews, who ought to be present and state what their accusation against me is, or whether they can prove any at all, stirred up a riot. If they cannot come here, let those who are present say what misconduct or wrong they proved against me when I was examined before their council, and if I did anything except to declare before them all — 'It is for the sake of the truth of IMMORTALITY that I am arraigned before you this day.' "

The combined influences of the experience of Felix himself, the letter of Lysias, and the straightforward defence of Paul, resulted in the trial being postponed. He had heard of the Nazarenes, and the feeling their belief excited among the Jews, and deciding not to give up Paul to the Sanhedrin, he said that on the arrival of Lysias, he would determine the case. Paul was sent back to the guard-room, but the centurion received instructions that he should be indulgently treated, and permitted to see his friends.

A few days afterwards, Felix, who had left Cæsarea, returned with his wife Drusilla, the Jewess, who was curious to see a prisoner so well-known, and who had excited such a stir among the people, and Paul was sent for and allowed to explain his belief in the mission of Jesus. The poor prisoner succeeded in making the Roman governor tremble as he reflected upon the cruelties and selfishness of his career. He spoke plainly of the results of righteous conduct, and self-restraint, and of the inevitable consequences of the deeds done in the body on the spirit in its future life. Did he not *know* the truth of what he declared? It was no mere speculation, but a living fact to him. He had *seen* the glorious spirit of the "just one," who had sacrificed his life for man, and he knew the result of a noble life, and that there was an unseen world, in whose high spheres of light those alone could dwell who followed in the Master's footsteps. It was with the power of truth that he assailed the stony citadel of the Roman governor's heart. But like many another, his hearer did not desire to hear what made him think as he had never thought before. He wanted to enjoy this world come what would, and no matter what its pleasures might cost others or himself.

"Go for the present," he said to his too-earnest captive. "When I find a convenient opportunity, I will see you again."

Drusilla was hardly likely to welcome such truths as these, and on her no impression was made. There are

cases in which woman knows less remorse than man, and hers was one of those. Felix kept his promise, but does not seem to have become a convert, while he hoped that some of the friends of Paul would have come forward, and ransomed him from his captivity. He was ready to release him, if a sufficient sum was placed in his hands. Paul's friends, however, were too poor, and too scattered, and it is hardly likely that he ever repeated the hints which had no doubt been thrown out during his conversations with Felix. His imprisonment made Felix popular with the Jews, and since no further effort was made from Jerusalem, he was left in the guard-room of the palace on the succession of Porcius Festus to the Procuratorship, after having been a prisoner there for a period of two years.

What he felt during that weary time, whether warm-hearted friends came to see him frequently in order to cheer the gloom of his position, whether he beheld unseen presences, and heard the voice of the Nazarene bidding him to be strong and endure to the end, we know not. Details like these will interest the world, when at some appointed time, the spirit of Paul will find a human hand through which he can write his own history in full, and correct the imperfections of the old record. The present task is to point out the spiritual design, and the true understanding of that will prepare the way for much that, however real, and however true, would be futile at this period. Nor in the eyes of the holy workers of the past have formal details any value compared with the preservation, or the full revelation of those truths for which they gave up all that made life dear. Their gaze is ever fixed, not on the individual, but on the cause to which his life is consecrated.

The conduct of Felix with regard to a riot at *Cæsarea*, during which he acted with great cruelty to the Jews, resulted in the appointment of Festus, in the year 60 A.D. One of his first actions was to visit Jerusalem and the Sanhedrin took the opportunity of informing him of the case of Paul at *Cæsarea*, against whom the

brought all the old charges. They had not forgotten the heretic, and wanted to get rid of him, if possible, altogether, and as an especial favour they requested that he should be sent to Jerusalem, well knowing that they would contrive to despatch him on the road. Festus, however, refused to grant the favour. He replied that Paul was in custody at Cæsarea, and as he was about to go down there, those Jews who were in authority could accompany him, and if there was any cause of offence, would be able to publicly prove it. This decision they were compelled to accept, and they took care to send persons who would do their utmost to ruin the imprisoned man.

In a little more than a week Festus left for Cæsarea, took his seat in the court as Procurator to hear the case, and Paul was once more brought into the presence of his deadly and relentless enemies. It is stated that they made "grievous charges" against him, and there is not a doubt that these constituted an attempt to represent him as a mover of sedition. Porcius Festus had been newly appointed; and it was easier to deceive him. Evil tongues know no scruples; their object is to condemn.

Paul was allowed to reply. In as few words as possible he flatly contradicted their statements. He said—"Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the Temple, nor against Cæsar, have I committed any offence." Festus, who recognised that the deliverance of the prisoner to the Sanhedrin, would make him popular with the Jews, and thus form a pleasant commencement to his new appointment and its responsibilities, asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem, and be tried there under his own protection. Paul replied, "I am standing before the legal court of Cæsar, in which I ought to take my trial; against the Jews, as you well know, I have done no wrong. If I am a criminal, and have committed anything deserving death, I am ready to die. If the charges brought against me are untrue,

no man can deliver me to my accusers. *I appeal to Cæsar!*"

That settled the question. Paul unquestionably had the right to appeal to the highest tribunal of the empire, and he was inspired and impelled to make it. After consulting with the officials, described as "the council," the Procurator, who was hardly too well pleased at the indifference manifested alike by accusers and accused to his own jurisdiction, turned to Paul with the words—"You have appealed to Cæsar, and your appeal is final. To Cæsar you shall go." And the prisoner was taken away once more, and locked within the dreary room, the very stones of which were so familiar to him that he knew their shapes, and hues, and number, and even the stains and marks upon floor and walls by heart. For the first time since he had been there, a ray of light seemed to penetrate the gloomy chamber. The event foretold to him by Jesus was about to take place. Soon he should be delivered from that place of silence and inaction, and heavy trouble. He was going to Rome.

CHAPTER VIII.

TO ROME AND DEATH.

A SHORT time after this event, Herod Agrippa II. and his sister, Berenice, came to Cæsarea to pay their wonted complimentary visit to the Procurator. While they were there, Festus laid before Agrippa the singular case of Paul, informing him that Felix had left a prisoner in the palace, whom the Sanhedrin had mentioned to him when at Jerusalem, and whom they wished to be condemned; that he had replied that it was not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to the authorities until he had been brought before his accusers, and had been afforded an opportunity to defend himself, and accordingly that when the Sanhedrin had arrived in Cæsarea, the prisoner had at once been brought before his tribunal. He had then seen that he was guilty of no crime, as he had been led to suppose, but was called in question with regard to their own religious belief, and especially one Jesus, who was dead, but whom the prisoner declared to be still living. He had been perplexed as to what course to take in such a matter, and had asked him if he would consent to be tried at Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin; but the man had appealed to the tribunal of Cæsar, and he had therefore ordered him to be kept in custody until he could be sent to Rome.

On hearing of this unusual state of things, and that Paul was a celebrated character, Agrippa observed that he should like to hear him speak himself; and Festus promised that the prisoner should be brought before him on the following day.

It is impossible for any mortal to overthrow those

designs of the angelic spirits which are intended for the benefit of human beings. Not only was Paul protected from the fury of the Jews by those very Gentiles whom it was his mission to teach, but he was able to proclaim that mission before the most influential of them,—the very public authorities and social leaders foretold by Jesus of Nazareth before he paid his last visit to Jerusalem.

From the character of the record, it seems that some large chamber in the palace must have been the scene of Paul's address, and that it was made the occasion for a display suitable to the nature of Herod Agrippa's visit. It was a state affair, and poor Paul, no doubt poorly clad, and insignificant in appearance, was led forth from the dull recesses of his lonely and depressing guard-room into a blaze of splendid costumes and uniforms, and the presence of the king, the Procurator, the Roman military commander, and all the persons of note or influence in the city. It was enough to dazzle minds less strong than his, enough to unnerve the frame, to silence the lips, to confuse the thoughts. But he had seen what made even that brilliant scene seem dull in comparison,—the "vision of the holy one," and the grandeur of the spirit. He was only too eager to break through the long dumbness of those weary days, and to speak, no matter where, no matter before whom, so that he might once more be at work for his sacred cause.

Festus introduced his prisoner to Agrippa and the assembled court with a few brief words, pointing out Paul as the man who had been the cause of so much popular excitement, and whom the Jews at Jerusalem had declared unfit to live, and adding that, as he had committed nothing worthy of death, and had himself appealed to the emperor, he had determined to send him to Rome, although he had no tangible charge to despatch with him. In consequence, he had brought him before them all, and especially the king, Agrippa that, after examination into his cause, he might be able

to know better what he ought to state, as it seemed to him a folly to forward a prisoner and not to be able make any definite charge against him.

Although the assembly did not partake of the nature of a court of judgment and a formal trial, the opinion of Agrippa, and his examination into the facts, were of service to Festus; and Paul's words were all to be taken into consideration in the representations to be sent to the emperor. He was placed on his defence, and, briefly addressing him, Agrippa said, "You are permitted to speak in your own behalf."

Without a moment's hesitation, Paul uplifted his arm with a gesture of intense earnestness, and spoke with a fearless strength of conviction which persecution and prison had only served to make more forcible and firm. He commenced by stating that he was only too happy to make his defence before a king who had been educated in the religion and amid the customs of the Jews, and begged for a patient hearing. He then referred to his own training in early years, — how he had been brought up in the most rigid Pharisaism, and how he stood there to be judged with regard to the hope of Israel, for which his nation had been looking so long, and which he knew was fulfilled. "It is because of this hope," he exclaimed, in a burst of impassioned language, "that I am accused by the Jews. Yet, why is this truth of immortality, — of deliverance from death, — so incredible? The time was when even I thought it a duty to oppose the work of Jesus of Nazareth, and I persecuted many of his followers in Jerusalem and imprisoned them, — having myself received a commission from the Sanhedrin, — and when they were condemned, I gave my vote against them. And sometimes I sought them out in the synagogues, and even endeavoured to make them recant or curse the truth, and so furious was I that I followed them even to foreign cities."

And then he recounted again the story of his journey to Damascus, — that experience which was written on

his heart in fire, — how Jesus himself had called him to enter upon a new existence, and to proclaim himself all that he had seen, and to go forth among the Gentiles, that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the powers of evil to God, so that wrong-doing might cease among them, and they, also, might see how to attain a life that should never die.

"And it was because of THIS," said Paul, "that I was changed. I could not disobey that heavenly vision!"

He described his labours, and how the Jews had seized him in the Temple and endeavoured to kill him. "But," said he, "being filled with the strength that comes from God, I stand even to the present hour, speaking both to small and great, the very things which the prophets and Moses himself foretold, — how the true Christ would first of all suffer humiliation, and after that how he should be the first to give, by his immortal power, a light to all his nation, and also to the Gentiles."

Never before had Festus heard Paul speak so fully, and with such fire. He sat amazed and puzzled at eloquence which seemed to him consecrated to dreams, and prophecies, and a visionary infatuation.

"Paul," said he, "you are mad! Your studies have turned your brain!"

He replied, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus" ("your excellency," in modern modes of speech), "but speak the words of sober truth. The king is aware of these prophecies, and I am informed that he is also aware of many of the events which I have related, for they have not taken place in a corner."

Turning to the king, he added: "King Agrippa, do you believe in the prophets? I know that you believe!"

The king replied: "You wish, with a few words, to make me a Christian!"

With all the intensity of his nature did Paul answer: "I would to God that, whether with few or with many, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might

become all that I am myself, except the suffering of this imprisonment ! ”

Then the hour drew to its close, and the assembly broke up and occupied itself with more familiar spectacles and entertainments. One result had been attained. The general opinion was that the prisoner was guiltless of any wrong-doing. As they sat together in private, Agrippa observed to Festus — “ This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Cæsar.” And poor Paul, who did not hear the decision which would have made his heart leap, sat alone in the small stone guard-room, awaiting the will of the holy ones who desired to take him to the far-off Gentile city. That imprisonment saved his life. Had he ventured to appear in public in any part of Palestine, or the cities of Asia Minor, he would have been killed by secret orders from Jerusalem. The Jews and their synagogues had spread far and wide, and were in communication with each other. Paul had become notorious, and the hands that would be uplifted against him were nerved with religious bigotry and patriotic zeal. His sole shelter was a prison, and when he was liberated from it, it was necessary that he should recommence his work at a great distance, and for a time in comparative seclusion. Then the angry sea in a measure subsided, and the Jewish priests had become so far content, that they had succeeded in hunting him from the land they loved, and out of the holy city.

The first available vessel conveyed Paul and other prisoners in charge of a centurion called Julius, of the Augustan cohort, away at last from the monotony of the Herodian palace and Cæsarea. The ship, a trading vessel, was to coast round to the principal ports of Asia Minor, and take them as far on the journey as possible, and it must have been with a feeling of relief, that Paul stood on her narrow deck, and breathed the free air of heaven, and beheld the beauties of sea and shore.

He had companions, too, in Luke and Aristarchus, who were able to be constantly with him, and as his

faith had never swerved, and he felt he was taking that voyage for the sake of his cause, for the moment, notwithstanding the many discomforts of a small vessel of that date, and his own frail condition of health, he felt a ray of sunshine fall upon him through the clouds. The towers and buildings of Cæsarea diminished far out of sight, and a favourable wind took them speedily to Sidon. Julius treated his prisoner with great consideration, and he was allowed to go on shore, and see some friends there who had grown wise in the new faith. He returned from his visit refreshed in mind and body.

The progress of the vessel after this was delayed by contrary winds, and it had to keep its course to the northward, until it came under the lee of the island of Cyprus, from whence it was able to tack in the direction of Cilicia and Pamphylia. At the port of Myra in Lycia, it stopped, and there Julius found an Alexandrian vessel, laden with corn, which was bound for Italy. To this vessel, the prisoners were all transferred. A direct voyage at that time of the year, — late in the autumn, — was, in the condition of navigation then, impossible. And at the best, sea-voyages were hazardous, even to coasting-vessels, and many foundered and were lost with all their crews.

The wind, which seemed to have been very strong, and was blowing from a contrary quarter, delayed the progress of the ship to such an extent, that after the lapse of several days, it only reached a point opposite the harbour of Cnidus, which could not be entered, and with considerable difficulty it reached the island of Crete, and coasted along as far as Fair Havens, near which was the town of Lasea. At Fair Havens it stopped, as the captain hoped for a change of wind. After much vain waste of time, stormy weather seemed to them all to have fully set in, and the date of the autumnal equinox, after which navigation was generally closed, passed by. Further sailing was attended with absolute danger, and Paul, who was guided by spiritual

influence, warned the centurion and others, that the voyage they contemplated would be attended with loss of the ship's cargo, and possibly of the ship itself, and that their lives would be endangered. The captain, and the owner, however, sailor-like, were anxious to press on, and Julius paid more attention to the practical "man of the sea," than the clear vision of the Cæsarean prisoner. As the majority observed, the harbour of Fair Havens was very inconvenient to winter in, and it was better to make an effort to reach the port of Phœnix on the southern side of the island where there was safe anchorage. A southerly wind seemed to favour their object, and weighing anchor, the vessel coasted along the shore of Crete. Paul's impression was, nevertheless, correct, and in a short time the wind which blew from a well-known quarter and was known to sailors as "the Euraquilo" or Euroclydon, suddenly changed, and increased to a gale.

The poor little ship began to drive at the mercy of wind and wave, until it was steered with a good deal of difficulty under the sheltering cliffs of a small island called Claudia, where they were able to hoist up the boat, and secure the vessel by the clumsy and ancient expedient of girths. Fearing that they might drive upon the sands of Syrtis, the sailors steadied the vessel by a reefed mainsail, set the storm-sail, and let her drive. The storm did not diminish, and as the vessel laboured heavily in the sea, and shipped water, the sailors lightened her of her cargo, and at last even of her masts and cordage. As days passed on, and the heavy weather did not abate, and the sky was so overcast by threatening clouds that neither sun nor stars were seen, all on board at last gave up hope, and looked upon themselves as lost. To add to their misery, provisions grew short, and they suffered from hunger no less than from anxiety and distress of mind. Then it was that the words of the seer were welcome. As they were gathered on the deck, drenched, cold, hungry, and wretched, Paul, who was guided by a holy and far-

seeing spirit, went into their midst, and began to cheer them. He said—"You should have listened to me, and not sailed from Crete, and thus brought this trouble and loss on yourselves. But now, I must bid you to keep up your courage, for not a single life will be lost, although the ship will be wrecked. And I know this, because last night, a spirit, a messenger of that God in whom I live, and whom I serve, stood near me, and said, 'Do not fear, Paul! You must stand before Cæsar, and therefore the lives of those who are sailing with you are safe.' Therefore, be full of hope!—for I believe this message from heaven, and that everything will happen exactly as I have been told. We shall, however, be wrecked, and cast upon some island."

To the captain, and the owner of that vessel, this statement of Paul's must have seemed very extraordinary in more ways than one. The cargo they valued so much had been almost entirely lost, and with it the price they would have received at some foreign port; the vessel itself was a part of their fortune, and there were upwards of two hundred persons on board. But all this was of little importance, it seemed, compared with the preservation of the life of that strange prisoner. Yet it was true. The power around him would protect the lives of all, because that power designed to take the man "before Cæsar!" Those, therefore, in casual connection with him were watched and guarded, nor was any trouble permitted to befall him which was not over-ruled for good.

After a fortnight of this terrible weather, during which the dismantled and leaky ship seemed in imminent danger of foundering, the sailors thought one night that they were approaching land. They sounded and found they were in twenty fathoms of water, and, after sounding again, discovered that the twenty fathoms were reduced to fifteen. Fearing the ship would go on the rocks they dropped four anchors from the stern, and in intense anxiety watched for the dawn. As soon

as the first streaks of daylight appeared on the horizon, and they caught sight of the point off which they were anchored, some of the crew under pretence of making the anchorage more secure, attempted to lower the boat and get away. Their intention was seen through by Paul, who was impressed to watch their movements, and, calling to the centurion and the soldiers, he pointed out their treachery, truly observing that the lives of those on board the vessel depended on the sailors remaining with them. The soldiers instantly ran to the prow, and, cutting away the ropes holding the boat, let it fall into the sea. Their sole chance of getting to land seemed to depend on the skill with which the ship was steered on shore, and the crisis speedily came. Daylight arose at last upon the scene, and it was necessary to set to work. Recognising the tax which would be laid upon the strength of all, Paul entreated them to take some food, reminding them that they had eaten next to nothing during the past fortnight, and that life depended upon their exertions. "And," said he, calm in the assurance given him by the guiding spirits, "not a hair of the heads of any of you shall perish."

Probably there had not been much to eat, and what there was had been doled out in small quantities. Since they were close to land, and the ship would inevitably go to pieces before long, further restrictions of that kind were needless. Paul took his bread, and uttered an earnest prayer to God before them all, and, seeing his firm faith in their speedy rescue, they caught something of his strong spirit, and ate their share almost cheerfully. After the repast was over, they worked hard; and one of the first things done was to lighten the vessel by throwing over all that remained of the cargo of wheat. Before them appeared a comparatively sheltered bay; and, resolving to let the vessel drive ashore upon the beach, they cut away the anchors, hoisted the sails, and let her drift. In a very short time she ran aground and stuck fast on a bank

of mud. The forepart of the vessel remained immovable, but the stern was so furiously beaten by the surf that she began rapidly to break up. The Roman soldiers, thinking that the prisoners for whom they were held responsible with their lives, would in all probability escape, resolved to kill them; but Julius, who had been not a little impressed by Paul's courage and singular power of prevision, would not permit their designs to be carried into action. He gave orders that those who could swim should jump overboard, and thus, some by swimming, and others by floating with broken pieces of plank from the ship, were enabled to get in safety to the welcome land. In this way nearly three hundred persons escaped death through the influence of one man, inspired to counsel wisely, to ward off dangers, and to cheer them in their wretchedness, through the unseen guardians who had chosen that he should sail in that apparently unfortunate Alexandrian corn-ship.

They soon discovered that they had been cast upon the island of Melita, the modern Malta, and the wreck immediately became known far and wide. The natives speedily gathered round them, and treated them with great kindness. They kindled a fire, and provided them with shelter from the rain and driving wind. As Paul was helping to collect some fuel, and was about to lay a bundle on the fire, a viper, revived by the heat, uncoiled from it, and fastened upon his hand. The natives who saw it, and who knew that he was one of a band of prisoners under the charge of the Roman centurion, were superstitious enough to fancy he must be a murderer, or some great criminal, who was overtaken by the vengeance of heaven, although he had escaped death in the stormy sea. Whether the creature really bit Paul or not is doubtful. In a second he had shaken it from him into the fire, and remained unharmed. The natives who had recognised it as one of a deadly species expected that his arm would swell, and that he would certainly die. Finding after an hour of eager watchin

that he walked about as usual, and complained of nothing, they considered his escape was miraculous, and whispered to one another that he was an incarnation of one of the gods. His reputation speedily increased. No doubt the sailors detailed the story of his vision, and the prophecies he had made when they were out at sea, and the event of the shipwreck itself excited the sympathies and interest of the entire island. The governor, Publius, who owned a good deal of land, and resided in the little town of Alta Vecchia, received Julius and his charge with generous hospitality, and was very soon made acquainted with the seership, and the healing gifts of Paul. His father was at that time ill with an attack of fever and dysentery, and Publius begged his assistance, and took him to see the old man. Paul earnestly prayed for strength by his bedside, and laying his hands upon him, a vital power went forth which arrested the progress of the disease, and rapidly effected a cure. After this many of the islanders sought his help, and many of their diseases were relieved and dissipated. Paul and his friends were regarded with deep respect, and when they were able to leave the island, the natives supplied the vessel in which they sailed with many luxuries.

At Melita he had remained three months. Why this was desired by those who were guiding his work we know not with certainty, but there were probably several reasons. One may have been to give Paul a period of rest after his trying experience in Cæsarea, in a place where he could not only enjoy complete freedom, but be protected from suffering and persecution; another, to prevent his arrival in Rome at some inauspicious or inconvenient date; a third, to build up his physical being with good food, fresh air, exercise, and cheerful companionship, before he faced the uncongenial conditions of the imperial city. That the shipwreck was an essential event in his life cannot be doubted.

As soon as the weather permitted, another Alexandrian corn-ship, the *Castor and Pollux*, prepared to go to

sea, and sail to Rome, and in her Julius and his soldiers, and the prisoners, once more embarked. They reached Syracuse, and remained there three days for a fair wind, and then sailed on to Rhegium, in Southern Italy, whence a fresh south wind quickly conveyed them to Puteoli. There some converts were discovered by Paul and his companions, and through the indulgence of Julius, who had learned to trust them, they were allowed to spend a few days with these "brothers in the cause." They then left for Rome on foot, and at Appii Forum, some forty miles from the great city, they were welcomed by another party of Christians, who had no doubt heard of Paul's arrival from those of Puteoli. At a place ten miles farther, called *The Three Taverns*, a few more came, and Paul felt cheered by their sympathy. Drawing near as he was, to the scene of a final trial, he recognised the power of the truth for which he had suffered so greatly and thanked God, and took courage.

At last Rome was reached, and Paul, under the surveillance of a soldier of the Prætorian guard, was allowed to select a comfortable lodging. He arrived in the city, so far as can be known, about the date of March, 61 A.D., and the reigning emperor was the unfortunate Nero, who had succeeded to the throne some seven years before. Happily for Paul, Festus Porcius, Agrippa, and the centurion Julius, had all been favourably impressed, and the prefect of the Prætorian guard, himself a man of upright character, was thus disposed to treat him with all the consideration that was possible. The sole annoyance to Paul at that time must have been the chain which coupled him to the soldier, but he was permitted to associate with any one he chose, to see friends, and enter into work which was quietly and effectually accomplished.

His first step, after his arrival, was to confer with the most influential persons of the colony of Jews, who resided in the quarter called the Ghetto, and to explain his position to them, realising that it was better for him

to present to them his own version of the facts, than to allow them to be influenced by false and malicious misrepresentations from Judæa. He told them that he had committed no wrong against their common fellow-countrymen, nor against the customs of their fathers, but that he had been seized in Jerusalem and delivered to the Roman authorities, who, after examination into his case, desired to set him at liberty, as they saw that he had done nothing worthy of imprisonment or death. But, that when he had seen that this was opposed by the Jews, and that they wished to condemn him, he had appealed to Cæsar, although it was with no wish to make any accusation against those of his own nation.

"It is to explain this to you," he said, "that I begged you to see me, for it is for the sake of the hope of Israel, that I am bound with this chain."

This "hope of Israel," his visitors well understood to be the Messiah; and that Messiah they knew he believed to have been Jesus of Nazareth. They replied to his statement in a way which showed that they desired to evince neither premature sympathy nor opposition. Rome was very different from Jerusalem. Worldly caution may have influenced them to avoid mixing themselves up openly in any way in his cause.

"We have received," they said, "no letters from Judæa with regard to you, nor have any of the Jews arrived among us, bringing any report of you, or any charge against you. But we should like to know," they added, "what you think yourself? We should like to hear your opinions; for this new sect, we are well aware, is *everywhere spoken against*."

Of course it was, and long afterwards. The truth was as unwelcome to the believers in the popular gods, as it had been to the worshippers of Moses. It was hated all the more, because it was winged with victory.

A day was fixed by the Jewish leaders for the purpose of hearing Paul's explanation of his belief, and a large number of them thronged to his lodging. He unfolded to them the nature of the real kingdom, for

which his nation had so long looked with hope, and proved that Jesus was the Messiah from the symbolic ordinances of Moses, and the declarations of the prophets. It occupied him a whole day, and some were impressed, and believed in his teaching, while others were unmoved and incredulous. Discussion arose, with the inevitable heated language with accompanies any debate on the question of religion, and the majority seemed opposed to truths so alien to all the most cherished ideas of their country. To the grandeur of the idea of the true Messiahship, — of a kingdom of God, and a king in the spirit, — they were wholly unable to reach.

Paul closed his work by recalling to their minds the words of the prophet Isaiah, who had declared to their fathers, that although they heard they should not understand, and although they beheld, they should not see, because they had sunk into materialism, and their hearing had become dulled, and their eyesight dimmed, so that they could not turn from the old pathway and be healed.

“Therefore,” said he, “you must know that this divine salvation is sent to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.”

After this he remained, still chained to the soldier of the Prætorian guard, in his own chosen lodging, receiving visits, not only from his companions and fellow-workers, but from many Gentiles. To these he taught the beautiful truths concerning the new kingdom, and the mission of Jesus, the Christ, in freedom, and in comparative peace, for a period of two years. The narrative of Luke closes at that point, and the rest of the history of the great reformer must be sought or conjectured, from the events of that time in Rome, and from the words of his own letters.

The reasons why his trial did not immediately take place are unknown. In those days of slow and precarious travelling, there may have been many causes of delay, and the delay was heaven-designed. The em-

peror Nero has attained an unenviable fame for his vices and cruelties, and above all, for his barbarities to the Christian converts. But at the time of Paul's imprisonment, or rather surveillance, the Jews, who had been banished for a while in the reign of Claudius, enjoyed a period of immunity from trouble, which was due to personal influence in high quarters. They formed a population of some sixty thousand persons, possessed several synagogues, and lived in a quarter of the city known as the Trastevere, where they worked at their own trades. The Romans made little distinction at first between the Nazarenes and the Jews, and the latter were only too glad, after their recent experiences, to dwell in peace. That Paul's case was considered of no urgent importance, and that the Jews of Rome were by no means eager to press charges against him, since they themselves lived in the city on sufferance, is obvious. Thus, the delay, from whatever cause it arose was allowed to go on. It gave Paul an opportunity to dictate several letters, to advise and strengthen friends who visited him from the Gentile societies of other cities, and enabled him to teach many inquirers, among whom, were at first, many of the poorer class, and even the slaves, whose suffering and burdened lives made them more ready to hear of that future life of rest and liberty, than the philosophers and men of wealth who owned them.

Luke and Aristarchus appear to have lived with him, and Timotheus probably acted for a time as his scribe. His letters seem to have comprised one sent to the society at Philippi; one to the society at Colossæ; one to Philemon; one to the society at Ephesus; a letter to Titus, and two letters to Timothy. Internal evidence points to their having been written at Rome, and to the genuine character of the documents, over which recent criticism has cast needless doubts, similar to those which have questioned the gospel of John, the second letter of Peter, and the second and third letters of John. It must be remembered, also, that the original parchments

and papyri, have been irrevocably lost, and that copyists were liable to errors, or were influenced to make interpolations, which forbid those minute and critical examinations of the text which have engrossed and wasted the time of divines and scholars. The common probabilities, and the spirit of the writings named, alone constitute the subject worthy of attention, and the probabilities are certainly in favour of genuine authorship. The long-forgotten spirit will be recognised in a brief inquiry into their contents.

The visit of Epaphroditus from Philippi with a contribution of money for Paul formed the occasion of his letter to the society there; the philosophical disputations and errors of the Colossian society were the cause of his addressing that, since he was acquainted with Philemon, one of their leaders; the meeting with the escaped slave induced him to write specially to Philemon; and the letter to the Ephesian society naturally arose from his former connection with it, and his anxiety that it should preserve the truth in its purity. With occupations such as these, and daily efforts to quietly make known the work of Jesus of Nazareth, we can hardly doubt that the two years at Rome rapidly passed away. The record of Luke, who was sometimes a personal witness, and sometimes only heard a relation, of the events of Paul's career, closes with the short description of his life in the imperial city, and from his pen no more is known. The general belief, derived from the references made by the great teacher himself, has been, that he was at last tried early in the year 64 A.D., that he was set at liberty, and subsequently travelled in Macedonia, and other places, and that owing to the growing feeling against the Christians, was, as the ringleader of the sect, suddenly arrested again, imprisoned at Rome, and that he there suffered the last sacrifice of man for truth, — the martyrdom which stills the beating heart, and closes the seeing eye, and hushes the strong and earnest voice, in death itself.

Had Paul been in Rome during the fearful massacre

of the Christian converts, in the summer of 64 A.D., it would have certainly formed a last paragraph in the history of Luke, and that he had been previously rescued, and had indeed written those letters to Timothy and Titus is more than probable, and may be looked upon as certain. He seems to have spent months at Nicopolis with Titus, and then to have visited the old and familiar ground of Beroëa, Thessalonica, Philippi, and Troas, where he was received and remained with a convert called Carpus, from whose house he had to go so suddenly that he left even his cloak and parchments behind. The cause is conjectured to have been his last arrest, and how many enemies he possessed we know, as well as how eager they would be to win popularity with the imperial power. Imprisoned at Ephesus first, he was probably despatched, no longer as a harmless and indulgently-treated fanatic, but as a dangerous criminal to be tried at Rome. From Onesiphorus he received great kindness during that heavy time of trouble, but his friends generally deserted him. Paul was notorious, and it had become death to avow oneself a Christian. It was not easy to face the fires, and the lions, and the crucifixions, and the tortures which made sport for Nero and his degenerate people. He had to defend himself in the presence of the tyrant alone. That he *did* "stand before Cæsar" one cannot but believe, for it fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus himself. That he spoke his last testimony, long foretold, with the old fire, we may be sure, for he wrote that "the Master was with him and strengthened him, that the message might be fully proclaimed and heard by all the Gentiles."

And if for the moment he was "rescued from the lion's mouth," he did not escape. He returned to his prison only to be brought forth once more, to speak with the old courage in vain, and to be condemned at last.¹ The words of the letter he wrote to Timothy, entreating him to come, show what he realised. "I

¹ Probably in 66 A.D.

am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come!" His work was done. He knew it. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith! . . . The Master will receive me into his heavenly kingdom."

The sword which smote the head of one of the noblest of mortal men from his shoulders, delivered the weary worker from his impassioned struggle with the blindness of earth. His inspirations had been the inspirations of knowledge and of truth. He *knew* that Jesus was a living being; he knew that there was a life which others did not, do not, realise; he knew that there was a "natural body," and a "spiritual body," and he realised it in its glory at last! If Paul's conviction is the supreme testimony to the work of Jesus, it must be remembered that he was convinced and converted by the *proof* of an immortal life. The weapon of human cruelty fell, — thus has it cut short the loveliest life-blossoms that our planet ever bore, — but "*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,*" he "*was changed!*" The poor, worn body fell prone upon the ground, with the hands bound behind it, and was tossed aside by the Roman lictors with contempt. It was dead. But oh! the spirit of Paul arose and gazed upon the light which shone around the Son of Mary, and he who had been blinded upon the road to Damascus, was now wrapped round with the holy strength of that flaming sphere.

What had he suffered? For twenty years he had borne, for the sake of light for the people, the burden of the Master's cross. What was it? Hear him speak: "In unceasing toil; in scourgings; in many imprisonments; in danger of life, — for from the Jews I received forty stripes save one; three times was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; three times I suffered shipwreck, and a night and a day I spent in the deep. — in unceasing travels; in perils from floods; in perils from robbers; in perils from my own fellow-countrymen; in perils from the Gentiles; in perils in the heart of

cities; in perils in the depths of deserts; in perils on the sea; in perils from false brothers in my cause; in toil and weariness; in sleeplessness often; in hunger and thirst, and the daily anxiety for the truth, — I have fought my way!"

Thus was the light of immortality born, and the work carried on as the Master had foretold. The heroism of Paul, almost unparalleled, if we consider the age in which he lived, the pride and ignorance of those around him, and their extremities of cruelty, rescued the work of the Nazarene from a dread oblivion and lifted it up among the people. His faith, his firmness, his seership, and his inspiration, paved the way for an eternal work which is yet to come. He was one of the greatest of humanity's workers; he is one of the brightest of those beautiful spirits who have gathered round the Man of Nazareth in that beautiful land where dwell the souls of martyrs and reformers, — known as the Christ-sphere.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF THE FIRST WORKERS.

WITH the martyr-fate of Paul the history of this first grand effort to make known the mission of Jesus closes. Of the work of the companions of the Nazarene, comparatively little is known. The journeys of Peter to Joppa, to Cæsarea, and to Antioch, and the "many places" (all parts), briefly alluded to in the record of Luke, show that he also travelled, although not nearly to such an extent as Paul, and, it need hardly be said, with inferior power. The great facts of his life are comprehended in the records of the gospels, and it is only in a secondary position, as one who approves and endorses the active measures of another, that he appears in the pages which are almost wholly devoted to the history of the missionary to the Gentiles. There is no proof that he was ever "bishop" (presbyter) of Antioch; there is no proof that he ever went to Rome. Even if he did go there, it must have been long after the society of Christian converts had been founded, since it antedated even the visit of Paul. In the writings known as the New Testament, the only words which have any possible reference to such a visit are, "The church in Babylon salutes you," and the actual words are so vague that it is impossible to say with certainty what "Babylon" meant. Other cities might have answered to that name. The early fathers, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria, and others, offer no serious evidence on the subject. And if his death took place in the imperial city, it must have been so soon after his arrival, as to render the visit of little service to a cause already recognised. The state-

ments of the "forged Clementines" of the close of the second century are worthless. By no twist or turn of argument can it be shown that Peter was the founder of the society of converts to whom Paul addressed his lengthy letter.

Even if it is conceded that Peter visited Rome, and for a considerable period, the fact possesses no importance whatever in its bearing on the development of the semi-pagan, semi-Judaic form of Christianity which arose three or four centuries later in the Roman Church. The true apostolic succession is that which bears onward the Christ-spirit of Love in progress and reform. And in a very short time the martyrs and "confessors" of the truth were replaced by controversialists and ecclesiastics, who might have been the Gentile representatives of the very rabbis of Jerusalem. How far removed many of them were from the spirit of the Nazarene, whom they began to worship as a form of Deity, can only be shown by an examination, at present out of place, of their laboured writings, their zeal for "orthodoxy," their love of formal ceremonies, and their eager desire to persecute those who differed from them. They fell on their knees before one man at the expense of the humanity he had come to redeem and liberate. They exalted him at the price of all he held most dear. Therefore, the question of the possible visit of Peter to the imperial city, even the work that Paul accomplished there, even the noble martyrdoms suffered there by the Christians, have no sort of connection with the subsequent ecclesiastic organisation, the hierarchy, which was the natural result alike of the mental status of the Latin race when the Roman empire began to disintegrate and decline, and that law of human life which invariably entombs the work of an inspired soul in the speculations and ceremonial worship of priests.

Peter, doubtless, died a martyr to his faith. The strongest evidence that he did so is contained in the prophetic words of Jesus, who, as we have observed, was an unerring seer. The desire to claim him as

the "head" of the Roman church by the eager fathers of the second and third century, owes its origin to the fact that Jesus, warmed by his manifestations of devotion, once called him a "rock," and truly prophesied that "the gates of hell" should not prevail against that spiritual kingdom which Peter seemed to recognise, and in behalf of which, notwithstanding many failures, he would be the first to unfold in the "holy city." But the rock against which the waves of human scepticism, anger, treachery, cruelty, and persecution beat in vain, was beyond all question the inspired and indomitable Paul. And the real rock was the truth of the spirit.

Of the fellow-workers and companions of Peter still less is known. Andrew, his brother, is said to have travelled to many places, and to have been crucified at Patræ on the peculiar form of cross which owes its name to the legend of his martyrdom. Matthew was believed to have met his fate while preaching in Ethiopia, and Bartholomew, (Nathaniel), while in Armenia.

James, a leader of the brotherhood in Jerusalem, was a strict Jew. It was said that he was also a Nazarite, and he must have been filled with what may be called the religion of patriotism. There must have been a time in his life when he misunderstood and deplored the words and actions of his brother, Jesus,— words which infuriated the Jews at Nazareth, and deeds which at last broke up their home. But the appearance of Jesus after the crucifixion convinced him, and he cast in his lot with those who had, at all events, recognised a part of the work long before. He became sufficiently liberal in his views to assent to the freedom of the Gentile converts from Jewish rites; but his personal sympathies were, nevertheless, with those of his own nation, and he must have led that party of Judaisers who went beyond him, and sought in their zeal to destroy the work of Paul. He probably lived in Jerusalem, and was there on the occasion of Paul's last visit in 58 A.D. Josephus states that he was arrested by order of Hanan, the high-priest, and suffered martyr-

döm at the hands of the Sanhedrin in the year 63 A.D. The sole letter believed to have been written by him, and which is included in the "canon," fairly represents a portion of the views and moral teaching of a Christian Jew.

John, the brother of the martyr James, the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the follower of John the Baptist, was a connection of the Nazarene, and one who was his chosen friend. He had stood with the suffering Mother in that dread hour when "the sword had pierced her own soul," near the cross, on the small, bleak hill at Calvary, and in response to a last request of him who was stretched upon it, had led her to his own home. He had witnessed the spiritual victory of Jesus, and he was associated with Peter in his first efforts for the truth in Jerusalem. After the death of his brother, he, doubtless left the city for a time, and dwelt in the retirement which enabled him to become the instrument of a work differing in character from that of any of the others. All details concerning him are very obscure; but that his residence, or rather banishment, in the island of Patmos, in 68 A.D., was due to his belief is more than probable. For some time he seems to have been at Ephesus, and his life seems to have peacefully closed in the remote island, where he wrote his letters and beheld the strange and mystic, yet grand, series of visions which he recorded in the veiled language of the Apocalypse. He alone clearly saw the result, in a far-off age, of the mission of Christ on earth, and his silent seership was as essential to the interests of the truth as the earnest arguments of his companions. It is said he died at last in Ephesus, in extreme old age. That he would escape martyrdom was foreseen by Jesus, who told him he would "*await* his coming;" that is, that he would not be called away from the scenes of earth by violence, as would be the case with many others. To each Jesus himself came and gave a welcome as he entered into the life of the unseen world.

John alone remained until there fell upon him the final weakness of the last years of mortal life.

Of the mother, Mary, there is even less recorded. For the full comprehension of the grand fact of her life, — the intense faith impelling her to that sublime surrender which found voice in the words "Behold me! — let the will of heaven be done," — the age was not ripe. She did not teach in public. She did not take any prominent part in the events which took place in Jerusalem. That she was surrounded by her relations, and those who believed in the mission of her son, we know, because she joined them in their prayers. None know the age at which she passed away. None know the place. There was a wise reason for this obscurity and this retirement. The world was not ready to learn the greatest lesson of all the ages, in the perfect motherhood of woman. It was veiled, sealed, withheld from the multitude, to whom alone the result was realised in its Christ. The Roman church has been distinguished for giving her special adoration, — one might rather say worship, if all that is meant by worship has never failed to be tendered by its members, — but the "holy virgin," and her "immaculate conception," have only resulted in making the truth mysterious, and so removed from the common life and experiences of humanity that it is out of the pale of nature and of science. A further endeavour to point out the deep connection with woman and the Christ-man, as a part of the higher law, and the spiritual science which are dawning upon the horizon, will be made in a review of the future of the race. The gospel that woman has to proclaim is even of greater import than the old one so zealously preached by man; and the growing recognition of her equality with him as an immortal being, and the more refined ideals and greater liberty which have issued from the one, make possible the beauty and grandeur of the other. Man has long said that a Christ was born; it is for woman to demonstrate that the Christ can be. She will deliver from scepticism because she

will prove the power that resides in perfected humanity ; she will deliver from the burden of superstition in the churches by destroying their mysteries, and rending in twain the vail which has been the secret of their power. Of Mary, then, it was not essential, in the days of old that more should be known than this, — that Jesus of Nazareth, the child of the Spirit, was her son.

PART III.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES.

WE now approach the consideration of those letters the historic certainty of which is almost universally admitted, and which, however lamentably they may have been misunderstood and misused by the churches, are nevertheless invaluable as a testimony to the reality of the work of Jesus of Nazareth, and his influence over a Pharisee of Jerusalem.

It may be well at this point to review the little that is known of the books composing the New Testament, for the purpose of apprehending more clearly the direction in which alone consists their value. It is not in a connected succession of evidences, but in their inherent worth. Just as the true church does not consist of "apostolic succession," so-called, but of the soul-life of Christ manifested in humanity.

In the first place, that great reality of which mention has been made, is supported by two independent witnesses, a non-christian Jew and a pagan writer. Josephus, in a paragraph which there is no reason to question, (*Antiquities*, Book xx. chap. 9,) thus alludes to the persecution in Jerusalem: "Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; (having been appointed Procurator of Judæa) so he, (Ananus, who had just been appointed high-priest), assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions; and when he had formed an accusation against them, as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

Josephus did not say he himself believed Jesus to be

the Christ, but only that so he was designated, and he mentioned this to distinguish Jesus from the numerous persons who possessed that name. This passage must not be confused with the forgery in the eighteenth book, which from its own internal evidence is admitted to be a later interpolation. The same writer mentions John the Baptist as a good man, who exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, and baptised many of them, and also states that he was imprisoned in the castle of Macherus, and subsequently executed, owing to the jealousy of Herod, who saw his influence over the people and feared rebellion. There may reasonably have been private reasons as well, which account for the apparent discrepancy in the scriptural narrative, for the Herods were very far from remarkable for purity of life, or the exercise of virtue of any kind, and it is very probable that the outspoken prophet personally offended him.

The other testimony is furnished by Tacitus, (*Annals*, lib. xv, chap. 44,) in the course of an allusion to "those detestable criminals who went by the name of Christians." "They had their denomination from Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator, Pontius Pilate."

The further evidence offered by the life and letters of Paul is immeasurably stronger. It is the evidence, not of a passage, or a paragraph, in any volume, but of a life, and one which was suddenly consecrated to a long and weary struggle with the beliefs, and prejudices, and scepticism of his time. Clement of Rome, who wrote in the year 97 A.D., quotes from his writings in his first letter to the Corinthians, and he is also mentioned by Ignatius, who was martyred at Rome, 115 A.D.

With regard to the canonical gospels, in the large number of writings of those who are called the apostolic fathers, there are no quotations of the sayings of Jesus of Nazareth, or of the events connected with him, which may not be referred to the early traditions

and manuscripts which preceded them. The loss or destruction of various works, especially those of the heretics, which would have furnished information concerning the gospels in common use, and of which works only quotations remain embodied in later volumes, have veiled alike the authorship and origin of the four books known to the Christian world. Some forty "gospels" of the second century have perished; some thirty-six "acts" of various persons; several apocalypses, the history of Hegesippus, the Jewish Christian, who travelled extensively for the express purpose of collecting information with regard to Christian societies; the writings of Marcion, the first compiler of a New Testament, and those of Clement of Alexandria, with some forty books, besides of various authors. .

Among the most ancient lost gospels were the "gospel of Peter," the gospel according to the Hebrews (date, 120 A.D.), and the gospel according to the Egyptians (date, 110 A.D.). What has been called the "law of accretion" seems to show that these writings were extensively used in the compilation of the later histories. Of the extant apocryphal gospels of the second century, the chief are the Protevangelion, the gospel of the Infancy, and the acts of Pilate, or gospel of Nicodemus. The two first contain accounts of prodigies which destroy any value they may possess. In the former, a dove is represented as flying out of the rod of Zacharias, at the birth of Jesus; and it is said that Joseph saw birds arrested in their flight in mid-air, and animals and persons suddenly rendered motionless. In the latter, written in Arabic, every page is full of miraculous events. It closely resembles the legends of Chrishna, and the Bhagavat Purana, and probably owes its origin to an Indian source. They were wisely discarded, together with the "acts" of Peter and Andrew, written early in the second century, in which Peter is spoken of as making a camel go through the eye of a needle in the presence of a multitude of persons.

In the gospel of Nicodemus, there are various resemblances to the accounts of the crucifixion in the close of the canonical gospels, and the sentence of Pilate has an appearance of truth, whether it has or has not an actual basis of fact as regards the actual words. Addressing the accused Jesus of Nazareth, he said, "Thy own nation hath charged thee, as making thyself a king. Wherefore, I, Herod, sentence thee to be scourged, according to the laws of former governors; and that thou be first bound, then hanged upon a cross, in that place where thou art now a prisoner, and also two criminals with thee, whose names are Demas and Gestas."

Marcion, the well-known heretic, published about the year 145 A.D., the first New Testament, in Greek. It consisted of the "Gospel; and the Apostolicon," or ten of the letters of Paul. His heresy consisted in a complete rejection of the Hebrew scriptures, and a denial of the resurrection of the body, in which idea he was, broadly speaking, perfectly correct. His gospel has been pieced together from the works of his opponents, and resembles that of Luke. The charge made against him of corrupting the latter has been long withdrawn, as the writing of Marcion is considered to antedate the canonical gospel.

The general evidence which has been collected, and which, it must be remembered, is of a negative character, points to the non-existence of the canonical gospels before the date of 170 A.D. Justin Martyr, the author of the Apologies (150 A.D.), mentions John and his revelation, but not the gospels. He speaks, however, of the "Acts of Pilate." His silence with regard to Paul was probably due to the fact that the first collection of his writings was published by a heretic. Irenæus, who wrote 180 A.D., states that "Matthew wrote his gospel for the Jews, and in the language of the Jews, at the same time that Peter and Paul founded the church at Rome; that Luke, also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by

him, and that John's gospel was written to confute the errors of Cerinthus." (Cerinthus wrote 145 A.D.) But it must be remembered that Irenæus also states that Jesus was fifty years old when he was crucified, having been allowed to live in peace no less a period than *twenty years*, while publicly announcing the most revolutionary truths! This is incredible, alike contrary to all experience of human nature, and the testimony of all history with regard to the fate of radical religious reformers.

Any testimony based upon the quotations of Eusebius, the author of several notorious forgeries and falsifications of history, and the text of various writers, must always be subjected to criticism, since any statement made by him, undoubtedly requires independent corroboration.

Neither Basilides (125 A.D.) nor Valentinus (150 A.D.) can be accepted as reliable witnesses, as there is no evidence given by Hippolytus, (third century), that they quoted from the four gospels now in use. The Muratorian Fragment, discovered at Milan in the last century, is generally considered to date, at the earliest, from about 170 to 190 A.D., and some consider it of much later origin. Its list of the New Testament writings, including Luke, John, the thirteen epistles of Paul, and Revelation, would be valuable if the date of the document could be ascertained with any degree of certainty.

Of the most recent discoveries of manuscripts, the first are, the *Cureton Epistles*, found in an Egyptian monastery in 1842, and published by Dr. Cureton, of the British Museum, in London. They are three brief Syriac epistles of Ignatius, (martyred 115 A.D.), one to the Ephesians, one to the Romans, and one to Polycarp, and are considered the only genuine writings of his extant. He says: "Let me be accounted worthy of Jesus, the Christ;" and in allusion to his martyrdom, "Fire and the cross, and the beasts that are prepared, cutting off of the limbs, and scattering of the bones, and crushing of the whole body, harsh torments of the devil,

let them come upon me, but only let me be accounted worthy of Jesus Christ."

Next, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, mentioned by Eusebius, and supposed to have been lost, but discovered in the present century, and subsequently generally published not ten years ago, proves the existence and use of the four gospels about the middle of the second century. The text was carefully revised by Zahn, and republished in Germany in 1881. The opening verses of the gospel of John are freely quoted. This Syrian father died before 172 A.D.

And lastly, the *Teaching of the Apostles*, recently discovered in the ancient manuscript containing the letter of Clement and other writings which were found by Bryennios, (Metropolitan of Nicomedia in Asia Minor, and which has been published by him in 1883), contains various quotations, including the Sermon on the Mount, corresponding to passages in the gospels. It was mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius, and the date ranges between 120 and 160 A.D. It contains no evidence of the canonical gospels as such, but teaches a very pure ideal of life, not to be attained by an atonement of blood in the orthodox sense, but by following in the footsteps of the Master. The work opens with the remarkable words: "Two ways there are, one of life, and one of death," and proceeds to describe the life of love, and the life of sense and selfishness. After pointing out the persecutions which the Christians would endure (possibly a reminiscence of the words of Jesus), it closes with this singularly clear prophecy: "And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an opening in heaven," (the development of seership in man), "then the sign of the trumpet's sound," (the voice of truth), "and, thirdly, the resurrection of the dead," (or visible appearance of spirits), which would be followed by the re-manifestation of Jesus, and angelic presences on earth, which would be recognised all over the world.

It is impossible not to recognise where the weight of

evidence lies, — not in any external authority, or historian, but in the pages of the four books themselves. They are unique. With every allowance for errors,¹ slight exaggerations, a few interpolations, a few distortions of facts, they contain a broad harmony, and a living series of truths which show that spirits of wise and holy nature sought to illuminate imperfect but selected human instruments who revered the carefully preserved traditions, and the first early records concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and led them to place, at all events, a sufficiently clear outline of his work before the people. That even these arose far beyond the popular conception, has already been shown. And any more direct attempt to point out the truth amid the crude elements which were struggling at that early date, would only have resulted in disaster. The leaven of a pure life, far beyond the scope and force of any mere writings, had been given to the world; its full glory was destined to be seen in another age. The gospel of antiquity was a truth, the gospel of the second stage of progress was a man, the gospel of the third and present stage, is humanity. The one had to precede the other, and to prepare the way for the final liberation.

The four gospels of the canon have accomplished a great work, and form the foundation of a greater. In character they are alone among the books of the earth, for they have preserved a majestic life-record, and the spirit within them is sacred. The gross and ignorant perversions and lamentable abuse to which they have been subjected, amounting to little short of idolatry, must not blind us to the fact that they are beyond price. Let the authors have been whom they may, they were guided by a power above, and in the book of all others which has been the subject of so much stormy discussion, there is a spirit which is of the same order as that

¹ The prophecy ascribed to Jeremiah in Matt. XXVII. 9, and that to Isaiah in Mark I. 2, are to be severally found in Zechariah XI. 12, 13, and Malachi III. 1. These may have been the mistakes of copyists who inserted names not originally given, and are of slight importance. The original errors are carefully preserved in the revised edition of the New Testament!

of the one after whose name it is called. It is marked by that interior wisdom which drew Jesus closer to John than any of his other companions, and made him spoken of as "the beloved disciple." It is of especial value as a supplement to the other histories, as supplying what they did not contain, and as pointing out with great clearness a truth which made the final vision called "Revelation," possible to John, and to him alone. He plainly saw that Christ represented a great principle, one which the external criticisms of writers like Deutsch, who fancy that a few correspondences between one or two of the observations of the Nazarene, and some of the Talmudical maxims, will explain the source of his inspirations, — altogether fail to appreciate. Even admitting that there may be some small foundation for such a statement, and it is by no means certain that these very maxims are not of far later date than the time of Christ, his one great mission was to carry his words into action. Other great seers had realised, and counselled, and taught many truths; the illumined one of Palestine openly lived them out. And he alone demonstrated that radiant possibility, the higher immortality, the life that not only survives, but conquers the power of death.

Gautama had said — "What is the use of plaited hair, oh fool! What of the raiment of goat-skins? Within thee there is ravening, but the outside thou makest clean."

"Let a man overcome anger by love, evil by good, the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth."

"Some people are born again; those who are free from all worldly desires enter Nirvana."

In a papyrus of ancient Egypt, in the British Museum, there is written in a "Hymn to the Self-Existent,"

"All hail to Thee. . . the Central Source of all. . .
Thou art the Soul of Soul, the Life of Lives."

Hermes Trismegistus declared "God and the Father is Light and Life, of which Man is made. If, therefore

thou learn and believe thyself to be of the Life and Light, thou shalt pass again unto Life."

In the worship of Osiris, in Egypt, the leading facts of the life of the Nazarene were all portrayed, pictorially and symbolically, because they represented the secret wisdom of the hierophants, acquired in the various phases of initiation. Its connection with astro-theology, and the personification of the celestial orbs,¹ led some of the old kings to associate themselves with certain astrological influences, and aspire to deification. In lesser degree, the same thing was attempted by the Cæsars of Rome; and in yet more diminished form by the popes who followed. All this has been misread by the masculine intellect. The same basic ideas pervaded all religions; the Osiris, Isis, and Horus, were prophetic truths inherent in the very being and destiny of man. The few knew; the multitude were left in ignorance. Plato, Pythagoras, Plotinus, Herodotus, and many others were initiates of a secret order, yet Rome and Greece soon sank into materialism and its worst corruptions. To reach men, a living illustration was required, nor is there any other way by which great truths can be proclaimed. They can only be safely externalised, and changed from the esoteric into the exoteric, in a being possessing an exalted measure of wisdom and of love, and an organisation capable of giving them powerful expression. In embodiment, alone, can the divine knowledge be revealed to the people.

The words with which the writing called after the name of John commences, show that the recorder beheld Christ as a perfect light upon the pathway of human life. They may thus be transcribed:—

"The Christ-principle existed in the Eternal One,

¹The "descent into Hades" of the *Apostles Creed*, associated with Hercules, and other familiar deities, was evidently derived from astro-theology, and crudely expresses a truth which more than one reformer may recognise who has passed through a period of *winter*, silence, or inaction, before the conditions of a marked work are ripe. If the reformer represents an illuminating, or sunlike truth, he will by his faithfulness under trial, draw around him mighty forces, and *angels*, who will roll away the stone from his sepulchre, will develop that innermost strength of soul which will be and must be, victorious over the power of *death*, or darkness.

and before the world was made (or evolved). The Soul, appointed to demonstrate it, aided in the development and growth of the planet. He represented Life ; and his life is the light of man. His light, however, shone amid the darkness of ignorance, and was not understood. The prophet John was incarnated to point to this great work, and to utter inspired statements concerning it. The true light was about to appear, and he, also, was incarnated, but human beings knew him not. He came among those he had long watched and guided, but they gave him no welcome ; to those who did receive him he taught the divine pathway ; how they were regenerated in soul-development ; how men could be regenerated, or divinely born. The Christ-principle was incarnated among men, that we should recognise its grand nature, the manifestation of divine manhood, of heaven upon earth, of God in humanity, full of nobility and completeness. The prophet John spoke of him by inspiration, and declared that this Coming One had passed through the ages, and his ripeness and perfection have been recognised by us. Moses gave the law ; but the power to fulfil it in spirit and in truth came through Jesus, the Christ. None have ever seen the Eternal Spirit ; but this divine principle embodied in human form has reflected him."

What is there in a spiritual translation of these words which must necessarily be referred to the speculations of Philo and his idea of the Logos? Philo was a Jew who did not recognise Jesus as the Christ. Yet he may have perceived certain truths which are universal, and would, therefore, inevitably become connected with a life which embodied them. The words quoted are as clear and as simple as the sunlight. And they base the evidence of Christ and his God-given work just where it ought to strike home, — in the light he gave to the world. Contemporary writers, in many instances, have ignored great men, great events, and great revelations, and passed them over in silence. But for their stirrings in other directions, but for the re-birth of the mission,

or the philosophy in the generation which followed, we might fail to know that such men or such things had existed. By the time the gospels were written out, there was strange evidence of the life of this great truth. And that life was battling with the corruptions of Antioch, and even the death of far-off Rome. What can account for such a strange series of phenomena as Paul and the early Christians, but the FACT of the victory of the Man of Nazareth? If every philosopher in the imperial city and every orator in Greece had written of Jesus, they would never have approached such strength of evidence that he lived, and endured, and accomplished an immortal mission, as are given in the actions of those martyr-converts. The very evidence is spiritual. Had it been given in a more concrete and exact form it would have been impossible to have broken up the hard ground of ecclesiastical belief, so that the seed of the truth should be sown, when the years were ripe, far and wide.

The book which has been placed next in order, the *Acts of the Apostles*, whether an ancient Eirenicon, or not, is no doubt in the main a reliable history, and tells its story of persecution suffered in behalf of truth only too forcibly. It is in harmony, in this direction, with the experiences of hundreds of reformers; its spiritual manifestations are rational, and violate no law; its historical references are, with the rarest exceptions, accurate; the exceptions are unimportant, or susceptible of explanation. The letters of Paul corroborate that history to a large extent; the man who suffered so deeply through the blindness and bigotry of his fellows in the detached story of the events which took place after the work of Jesus of Nazareth, is the same man who wrote at times with his pen, as it were, on fire. In the one he is at first a young man,—Saul, “consenting to the death” of Stephen; in one of the last letters he wrote, he is “Paul the aged.” He allows therein that he is one of the least of the workers, because he persecuted those of their faith; he says himself that he is “an apostle to the Gentiles;”

that his mission was given him independently ; he details his Pharisaism, his conversion, his condition at Damascus ; his escape ; his efforts to join the brothers at Jerusalem ; the hatred of the Jews ; the companionship of Mark and Barnabas ; the various fellow-workers and converts, many of whom are also mentioned in the preceding record ; Titus, Timotheus and his conversion ; Luke, Mark, James, Peter, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, Tychicus, Aristarchus, and others, and the slanders and treachery from which he suffered. And he writes of his work at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Troas, and other places ; of his desire to visit Rome, and of the alms the societies had promised him for the purpose of aiding the earliest founded of them all. The spiritual gifts of the converts are alluded to in both instances, although Paul manifestly considered them all secondary to the light of the truth which had broken in upon his darkness, in the beautiful manifestation of Jesus himself. Hence his mind was centred upon the thought of immortality and the pathway to a higher sphere, and purity and immortality form the key-note of his labours and letters.

Enough has been said to show that men like Apollonius of Tyana and Simon Magus, the "heresiarch," never approached the sublimity of the truth made known in the being and the life of Jesus of Nazareth, with whom of late they, and especially the former, have been so often compared. Both lived in the first century, and the biography of the first, written by Flavius Philostratus (210 A.D.), portrays the life of the thaumaturgist rather than the worker for humanity. Among the details given is the story of his companion Darius beholding the chains with which Prometheus had been bound on Mount Caucasus ; and the account of a lion who came to Apollonius in Egypt, and burst into tears on hearing that the soul within him—that of Amasis—was recognised. A tree, also, gifted beyond the ordinary representatives of the vegetable world, bows and speaks. On the other hand, Apollonius possessed a pure and gifted mind, and a certain spiritual development which was not

clearly understood among those who witnessed his manifestations of clairvoyant and healing power. He was probably an initiate of a secret order. His letters breathe a fine spirit and he seems to have been a man of pure and noble character, although lacking the potent life of the spirit which touches the greatest issues of existence, and warms men generation after generation into deeds of self-sacrifice and love.

The story of the encounter of Peter with Simon Magus, in the *Recognitions*, the authorship of which is unknown, although evidently Christian, furnishes a very small basis for comment. That he was a thaumaturgist, and a person of very inferior order to Apollonius, seems evident. The "Christ" consists not of external marvels as such, but of the interior and immortal power which expends itself in beneficent deeds, in universal truths, for the welfare of man, and teaches him the pathway to victory over materialism and the death that is involved in it. The antiquity of the Christian doctrines only show that *being* in its perfection was manifested in the Nazarene, and that he was the living illustration of esoteric truths, which had flashed forth in many religions as a series of prophecies far more profound than any contained in the Jewish scriptures, concerning the possibilities which exist in the future of humanity. The "immaculate conception," the marriage of reason and spirit, points to the power which may develop the race in the soul-union of man and woman; the cross, the ancient symbol of life, to the struggle with death; the resurrection, to the spiritual victory which overcomes it; the atonement (at-one-ment) to the sacrifice of self which becomes light for the world; the Trinity; to the Eternal Soul; to the "Son," or its highest embodiment in planetary life; to the "Spirit," or the creative emanation which penetrates the universe. The divine humanity of the future, the "Christ" in man, will represent this sonship in its perfection. It does not exist for the earth at large. It cannot be attained by the people at large. It must be born. In asserting this, the way in

which some lives are consecrated to truth on this earth, and the efforts others are making to ascend a height shrouded in mystery because it is connected with the powers of the soul, are fully recognised. But the organisation of the immense majority of men and women, of all but the very few, render them insensible to the first steps of the pathway; and to force it open more completely and fully, and to place before the world those further illustrations of soul-life which will deliver the race, there is required the concentrated force of the new birth in offspring. And this can be furnished only through the interior union of purified man and woman. This is theosophy, not for the few, not for the cultured, but for the million. And it will give the same impetus to the whole of the future as the work of the Nazarene has furnished during the last nineteen hundred years of the past. To him, notwithstanding the materialism of the churches, has been due the civilisation of Europe. The beauty of purity, the power of spiritual strength, the reality of immortality, were believed in everywhere, because the Christ, long-veiled, had *come forth*. Saints, heroes, martyrs, and heretic-reformers beheld it, recognised it, and followed the Man. It was human life in its grandeur, the most sacred of "holy scriptures," and to reveal completely the wisdom of its pages, to prove beyond all question that it was a transcendent *fact*, the higher organisation of spiritual conception and birth is the necessity of the age, and the glory of the principles comprehended in the man and in the woman.

In connection with the subject of external evidence, the remarks of the writers of antiquity upon the Christian brotherhood must necessarily be linked together with some brief details of the growth of the Western church. A review of the gradual development and ascendancy of the Roman church belongs properly to a history of the struggle of the Christ-life with the materialism of man. Yet a few words may be said with regard to that singular hierarchical system, which on the one hand assumes the form of a saint and a martyr, and

on the other represents the incarnation of imperious tyranny and persecution. She has possessed some spiritual beauties, but far more, earthly glory, and she has also disclosed, in the sight of heaven, her shame. And her failure to preserve the work of the Nazarene was due, in the first place, to the inability of any organisation formed out of the people to be in advance of their conceptions, capacities, and desires; and, in the second place, to the consolidation of those primitive conditions into a system which forbade change of belief, and therefore progress, except in the direction of ritual.

The most conspicuous of the early Christians were martyrs, the members, not of an imperial church, but of a society struggling for existence amid the disintegrations of religious and social life in the Roman empire. Whatever may have been their faults, however great may have been their fanaticism, there is no question as to their heroism; no question as to their faith and the virtue of their lives. They endured the most terrible waves of persecution for the space of three hundred years. Among the most noted of these martyr-spirits were Symeon, of Jerusalem, who was crucified in 107 A.D.; Ignatius, of Antioch, who is generally believed to have been torn to pieces by lions in the colosseum at Rome, in 115 A.D.; Antoninus, executed in 138 A.D.; Publius, at Athens; Melito, of Sardis; Polycarp, of Smyrna, burnt alive in 166 A.D.; the martyrs of Lyons and Vienna, who were tortured, torn by wild beasts, beheaded and crucified, in 177 A.D.; Pothinus, beaten to death 178 A.D.; Anastatia; Maximilian; Blandina, fearfully tortured; Attalus and Sanctus, burnt; Potamæna, Apollonia, burnt; Leonides, of Alexandria, beheaded 202 A.D.; Perpetua and Felicitas, executed in Africa; Sixtus, of Rome, executed; Cornelius and Lucius, executed 251 A.D.; Cyprian; Laurentius, roasted alive 258 A.D.; Pamphilus, Hesychius, Methodius, Lucian, Hippolytus, and Victorinus, martyred at the commencement of the fourth century. The list

might be extended. And there were many nameless victims, even to thousands, of the last race of Cæsars.

There is no doubt that the extreme abhorrence of the Christian brotherhood for the pagan forms of worship, associated as they certainly were with various conditions of folly and corruption, excited the hatred of the people, no less than their reverence for the Nazarene inspired the contempt of the materialistic philosophers of the age. Most of the latter passed over the fact of the existence of the sect in silence, while those who mentioned it alluded to the Christians in terms of scorn. Tacitus wrote of Christianity as an "execrable superstition" and "an evil." Seneca called the Jews, who were for a long period identified with the Christians, an "accursed race;" Marcus Aurelius wrote contemptuously even of the courage of the converts; Celsus stated that "they were weavers, shoemakers, fullers, illiterate clowns," and that magicians performed more wonderful deeds than Christ "for a few oboli in the middle of the forum;" Trypho styled them "fools and low-born fellows;" Cæcilius, "men collected from the lowest dregs of the people; ignorant, credulous women;" Libanius said, "they have left their tongs, mallets, and anvils to preach about the things of heaven;" Julius wrote that "they deceive women, servants, and slaves;" Pliny alluded to the "contagion of their superstition, which had spread not only in the cities, but about the villages and the open country;" Suetonius styled them "men of a magical superstition," and, finally, they were charged with being wizards and sorcerers, alike by Jews and Romans, and with "denying the worship of the gods." It was not long before they were called "atheists,"—a sect who believed in an invisible and imageless God. And these statements are confirmed by observations of several of the early fathers.

Long before three centuries had elapsed, however, bigotry and materialism had asserted their power among

the Christians themselves, and the spirit of sacrifice was rapidly succeeded by the spirit of pride.

The first event which resulted in placing a superior authority in the hands of the society, or, as it became called, the "church," at Rome, took place in the latter part of the second century. It was the celebrated Easter dispute, which continued for some fifty years. The Latin churches claimed that Easter should be celebrated on Sunday, while the Eastern churches celebrated it on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan. A series of councils was held, at the request of the bishop Victor at Rome, for the purpose of deciding the question, with the result that all agreed that the day appointed should be Sunday, with the exception of the Asiatic churches. Encouraged by the other councils, Victor proceeded to excommunicate them, and it was by a deed which was essentially opposed to the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth that the supremacy of the Roman church was assured. Twenty years later the Roman bishops issued general edicts, and styled themselves *episcopi episcoporum*, or bishops of bishops, and the "elect of God."

The poor convert who scrawled within the catacombs the following touching epitaph upon his comrade—"In Christ, Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars! . . . Oh! sad times in which sacred rites and prayers, even in caverns, afford no protection to us! What can be more wretched than such a life, and what than such a death? He has scarcely lived who has lived in Christian times!"—lived to see the excommunication and persecution of his fellows for heresy by those who claimed to be the shepherds of the flocks.

The second event was the union of the civil with the ecclesiastical authority in the reign of Constantine, in the fourth century, which made the church of Rome the church of the Roman empire. Catholicism (not catholicity), dogmatic Trinitarianism, the elaboration of creeds and ritual, and the forcible suppression of heresy, date from this period. In the same century which witnessed the fall of paganism, the church itself

disputed about the essentials of its faith even to bloodshed. The use of holy water and incense; the veneration of sacred relics and places; the institution of penances and pilgrimages, shrines and crusades; the exchange of the tutelary deities into patron saints; the substitution of the altar and celebration of the eucharist, for the common table and early love feast, and of the sacrifice of the mass for the sacrifices of animals; of the images and pictures of Jesus and Mary for the statues of the gods; and of the transformation of many of the temples into places of Christian worship,—were as inevitable as the subsequent reign of the popes in the place of the departed emperors. They formed the compromise of the Christian societies, with the prevailing elements around them, and these lived by the absorption and transmutation of familiar beliefs and practices¹ into a religion in which the priest and the creed became at last more than love, more than brotherhood, and more than humanity. The pious frauds, the disputing councils, the interminable arguments on the “consubstantiality of the Son with the Father,” of the Arians and Athanasians, on transubstantiation, the incarnation, the sacraments, predestination, election, original sin, the state of “the dead,” the nature of the “atonement,” the damnation of Jews, heretics and schismatics, “apostolic succession,” the efficacy of celibacy, the exclusion of woman from the pulpit and the altar, and, finally, the complete repression of secular science and philosophy, reduced the church to a level with the mental condition of the mass of the people. It gave up the soul of Jesus of Nazareth in exchange for power, and made the cruelties of a later age, and the development of the “Holy Inquisition,” possible, even, as it seemed, laudable. The

¹ The baptism of blood was used in ancient temples of initiation, and the “sacrifice” of bread and wine was known to many nations of antiquity. The symbols of Phallic worship can be detected in the early church architecture, while in the dress and ritual of its priesthood may be traced the influence of the Egyptians, Buddhists, and pre-Christian temples of Rome. In the modern recognition of the connection of ecclesiastical Christianity with various practices and creeds which preceded it, the principle of *absorption*, or the partly unconscious adaptation of a new religion to the old in its many forms, has been lost sight of.

heretics of the future became the inspired man or woman ; the martyr, the defenceless seer, who differed from one or other of the dogmatic conclusions of the church. There is no concealing those streams of blood. They pass through the centuries until they disclose the sacrifice unto death of millions. It is an imposture and a degradation to associate errors so fatal with the work of the holy Nazarene. To deliver the churches from their gross materialism, to point out the spirit which is the key of all religions, and which will lead men into a brotherhood which knows no creed, no race, no sex, no dogma, is surely the demand of the Christ in an age like this. The common methods of elucidation and reformation only divide and hold asunder. That merely external series of criticisms which forms the modern culmination of the school of philosophy heralded by Voltaire and Paine, are useless as concerns penetration into the original and far-off life of any religion. They resemble the eye which sees flaws in the telescope, and forgets the star beyond. There is a hidden soul in every religious system, however perverted, or however corrupted, and the connection of these, and their revelation to the world, would unite men of every race in love and harmony. The mere iconoclast is always a bigot. The true seer is a liberator. He will inspire his fellows best and most powerfully by pointing to the forgotten spirits of their creeds. Externalism, whether it exists in science or religion, is death. It parts two who are an eternal one. Knowledge is powerless without wisdom. Wisdom is powerless without love. Man is non-creative without woman. The exterior studies of a universe of planets are worthless compared with the science of the interior life and capacities of one spiritualised human being. To know man in his perfection is to recognise how to build the world's temple. To apprehend the Christ is to "draw all men unto him," and to lead them in the pathway of immortal life.

THE LETTERS OF PAUL.

IT will hardly be necessary, after what has been said of the life of this remarkable witness, to the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, to dwell at any length on those letters which have formed the chief debating-ground of the most wearisome, mistaken, and perverted conceptions of ecclesiastics, from the time of the fathers down to the divines and scholars of the nineteenth century. Few have any idea of their simplicity, of the spirit of liberty contained in them, of the height of the truth which they declare. Abused as weapons of sectarian strife and controversy, until the secret of their strength has been lost, it seems one of the first steps toward the initiation of that universal brotherhood which alone represents the spirit of Christ, to endeavour to destroy the worship of the letter which is as truly an idolatry as the reverence of the fetish by the savage, and to set free the soul within.

The key to the whole of these writings of Paul may be given in the following leading ideas: —

That Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah expected by the Jewish nation.

That the Messiah comprehended universal principles, and the wisdom of the ages.

That he was the pathway to immortality, and the "salvation" of the human race, including Jews and Gentiles.

That purity of life in thought and action is essential to those who followed him, (the pathway.)

That the sacrifice of the Messiah had been necessary to humanity.

That rites and ceremonies are useless with regard to the attainment of the higher life.

When it is remembered that the writer was a Jew; that he sought to place before his converts a clear impression of his inspirations by references to the past, "atonements," "sacrifices of blood," and the ceremonial law of the Jews; that he was not permitted, or rather, was unable, to understand the secret of all power and wisdom contained in the perfect union of man and woman; and that he had difficulties to deal with in the gross corruptions of pagan life and religion, and the opposition and scepticism of his own nation, which it is hardly possible for us to realise, we may almost wonder, not that one man did so little to make such truths as these plain, but that he was able to give so much.

The records concerning the Nazarene have to pass through four stages: first, the purely historical, falsely supposed to be miraculous, and completely misunderstood, the apprehension of which has been solely masculine; secondly, the mythical, also believed to be the entire explanation of the existence of the historical, also solely masculine; thirdly, the connection of the mythical with basic principles which furnish the esoteric side of solar myths and ancient mythology, — the work of the exterior coöperation of man and woman; fourthly, the connection of the basic principles with the historical as their great Illustration, which is the birth of the truth, through the interior union of man and woman, and precedes the presentation of absolute evidence of the historical life of the Christ manifested in Judæa. Each of these stages will have been projected in complete independence of the other, as representing different states or conditions of development, — external creeds, free thought, masculine and feminine mental combination, and the silent soul marriage. In the last, the woman will receive only that wisdom which is without human voice, and passes like the breath of the wind, from the soul to the soul. She must be virgin, and experience the crucifixion-drama and Easter in her own

life, even to the very seasons of the year, to comprehend the possibility of the reality of the historical details of the past, and of the powers who guide above. It will be essential, moreover, to show that the "twain" are co-equal, as they are co-eternal, and that man and woman represent principles equally profound in fatherhood and motherhood.

The writings of Paul will be placed in the order of their dates, so far as they can be ascertained, rather than as before, in that of their relative importance, since their historical value is increased by the recognition of the circumstances under which they were penned, and it must not be forgotten that it was under the stress of local and temporary events connected with the various societies of converts that many of the epistles were called forth.

The First Letter to the Thessalonians.

This letter, written at Corinth, shortly after the visit of Paul to Thessalonica, either in 52 or 53, A.D., is the earliest one known of which he was the author. His two companions, the converts Timotheus and Silvanus (Silas) were with him in the Grecian capital, and are associated with his own name in the opening words. They were at work in Corinth, too much occupied to visit their Thessalonian friends in person, but all of them anxious that they should be aided and strengthened, and reminded of the love and continual interest which their faith, and efforts in behalf of the truth inspired.

The first sentence attracts our attention. Jesus of Nazareth is designated in this, and a large number of other passages, as the "lord Jesus Christ." These words have become so imbued with conventional Trinitarianism, so destitute of their real meaning, that it is essential to explain them. "Lord" was a term of respect in common use for a person who possessed authority. It was applied by Festus to the emperor

Nero in his explanatory address to the king Agrippa with regard to the captive Paul; to the angel, or holy spirit seen by Cornelius at Cæsarea, and Peter at Joppa; to another angelic spirit who appeared to John in Patmos; to Jesus of Nazareth seen by Paul on the road to Damascus before his identity was made known. The nature of the beings thus seen by mortal eyes inspired this feeling of reverence. The appearance of the spirit at the sepulchre was dazzling; so also was that of Jesus; so also was that of the spirit seen by John. The impulse of those who witnessed the sight was to idolise what seemed godlike; the desire of those who were thus manifested was to repel the old feeling of awe and worship, and to inspire, and guide, and reveal truth to humanity for the sake of all, to the instruments they had chosen. The word angel in Hebrew is equivalent to "a star"; both shine and are radiant with light; and so brilliant was the appearance of the perfected Nazarene that it is said his sphere was "above the brightness of the sun" at noon-day. It was the glory of a master-spirit, wise, illuminated, strong, filled with the full strength of immortality, the Soul who had become the light of the earth, and who shone "as the stars, for ever and ever." Hence Paul wrote of him as "the lord"; or in more intelligible language, the "Master," (one of the transcendent sacred Order above), "Jesus, the Christ."

A large part of the letter is adapted to the society to which Paul wrote; to their conditions; to the struggle and necessities of the time. And it must be remembered that the Jewish expectations of the Messiah as an earthly conqueror were involved with ideas derived from a study of prophecy, of a judgment of all nations, in which the enemies of Israel would perish amid terrible portents, while the chosen ones would be gathered into the new Jerusalem, and there worship in the temple of God. The spiritual fulfilment of the Messiahship had been recognised by Paul to have taken place in the person and work of Jesus, but he did

not at first recognise that all these expectations would also have a similar spiritual fulfilment. His words with regard to the second advent of Jesus misled, though perhaps fortunately, in many respects, the early Christians, and have less happily misled thousands of persons from that time to this, since a literal interpretation has been connected with them similar to that which led the Jews to expect from similar sources, a triumphant king for their own nation, and a material kingdom. The unfoldment of the Christ-spirit in man, and the "kingdom of God," which is the reign of the Soul, seems as alien to the conceptions of the Christian churches, as the spirit of Jesus was to the Jews. Yet what can be more grand, more complete, more sufficient for the interests of the world?

In all other respects, the letter is very simple. Paul expressed his thanks to God for their reception of the truth, and their good work for it, which had extended far and wide; and observed how publicly known it was that they had given up idolatry for the worship of the true God, and waited for the return of that son of God, even Jesus, who had arisen from death by divine power, and who delivered them from the "wrath to come." This "return," in Paul's view, was the reappearance of Jesus; in which he the more readily believed owing to his own startling experience; and "the wrath to come," was that expected condemnation of the enemies of God, or rather *good*, — that "judgment" which would accompany the re-manifestation of the Messiah.

So he wrote, wiser than he knew. For the spirit of Christ will return in all men; and when it does it will deliver from all suffering, from all enmity with the divine, and the power of God in the soul; it will be as a "balance" weighing the condition of every nation, in religion and social life, and the development of its people, and will lift up a standard of thought, and action, and *being* to which all must attain who desire not to be "found wanting."

Paul reminded the converts "how unjust had been the

accusations and calumnies against him ; how he had never sought to please or win the praise of men, but had only striven to present the truth, the "gospel," in its purity, and to do this had worked night and day to avoid being a burden to any of them. He was thankful they had received the message, which was of no human origin, but divine, and that they had bravely endured the persecution of their fellows, as their brothers in Judæa had among the Jews, who had killed the Master, and all who had been led of the spirit, and had driven him from city to city seeking to prevent even the Gentiles from receiving the light ; and who he might add were creating their own doom. He was separated from them in body but not in spirit, and had desired to visit them again, but opposition had prevented it." "*Satan*" signifies the opposing power ; the powers of darkness ; the materialism of mortals ; the influence of earth-bound spirits, limited in their view, attached to the material forms of religion, ignorant of the nature of the light sent from the spheres above. Against the truth, the powers of darkness have ever arisen, for the truth is universal, and bends not to the narrow creeds or momentary sympathies of men. Nor is it of earth, or apprehended by the intellect alone.

He alluded to the visit of Timothy, who had left him alone at Athens, in order that he should appeal to them to remain firm amid their sufferings, since he had foretold that they would occur ; and how the return of his fellow-worker with tidings of their strength of faith and love for him had comforted him in the midst of his own troubles. "Now I live !" he wrote, "if you stand firm in the Master." The very thought of it exceeded the power of expressing his thankfulness, and he earnestly prayed that he might see them again, and aid them to attain even a more perfect faith and a more perfect life.

Paul then passed on to those counsels which were indeed necessary to them amid the corruptions and impurities of pagan life. "The spirit of love and holiness must fill their hearts ; they must hold their bodies sacred and honour them as 'vessels' or instruments of the soul,

avoiding tempting, and being tempted, to any impure action. Whoever rejected these counsels rejected not the words of man, but the divine voice of the soul within, and the influence of holy spirits. Love for each other all should feel; they should quietly labour to maintain themselves, and act honestly towards others, including those who were not united with their society."

Then it was, that in order to cheer those who had lost friends by death, that he spoke of their renewed life, and the return of Jesus. They had not indeed remained to witness his second appearance, but would nevertheless *arise* and see him. It is unnecessary to recur again to the views of Paul at this period, and those of these converts. He expected a glorious manifestation of the presence of Christ, a bodily resurrection of the dead, and an ascent of those who were living, in the air. But the true return of Christ was destined for a far-off age; the resurrection of the body, to be fulfilled in a spiritualised race; the power to ascend to the higher spheres, in man redeemed from all evil, and from the corruption of death. Those who had died among the little flock at Thessalonica, had passed as spirits to the unseen world, having suffered for the faith, and having entered upon the pathway, and their bodies, corruptible, and subject to disintegration, perished, and as "dust, unto dust," once more returned. Paul was not yet inspired with this truth, and it must be remembered that his inspirations were progressive. He had heard of the saying of the Master that he should come in an hour when they thought not, and he had materialised the prophecy. The "day of the Lord" indeed advances with silent tread as a thief in the night, and amid the darkness, but the destruction is the annihilation of the blindness of man, imprisoned in physical life and without any knowledge but that derived from the misleading guidance of the physical senses.

The close of the letter is marked by a beautiful spirit of earnestness in the direction of the attainment of the higher life, and of acquiescence in whatever is wisely decreed. Recalling the dress of the Roman soldiers whom

he had so often seen, Paul bade those "who were 'sons of the day' to be sober; to wear the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of the eternal life. For God had willed that the way of salvation, (deliverance), should be given by the Master, Jesus, the Christ, who had been sacrificed for them, so that whether they lived or died, they should arise in life with him. Peace should reign among them, for they were brothers." "Encourage" he wrote, "the faint-hearted; support the weak; *be patient with all!*"

Oh! that the reformers of our own day, who should be brothers and sisters in a common cause, instead of betraying and oppressing each other, — even the suffering instruments who have borne the Master's cross for the sake of light to others, — would breathe out, in place of the stings of death, the aura of life, and sympathy, and love, and rise to that plane so unceasingly pointed out by Paul, and John. Every human being may be an instrument of diffusing health and vitality, or death and disease, through the sphere surrounding him or her. And thoughts, winged with love or hatred, speed like arrows across continents, or oceans, and bless or pierce those for whom, or to whom, they are directed. Love is divine, — the Nirvana, the rest, the glory of the soul.

"Let none return evil for evil; seek ever all that is good towards each other, and towards all; be happy; ever aspire; accept all things with thankfulness; for this is the divine power of the Christ in you. Quench not the fire of the soul; the influences of holy spirits; despise not the gift of prophecy; weigh all things; hold fast all that is good; abstain from every form of evil."

What is this but the voice of the Spirit? Is not this the pathway to the "peace which passes understanding," — the love, the calmness, the purity, which delivers from earth, and leads to the heavenly kingdom? Priests have hidden the truth in creeds, but it is a science, — the science of the life of the soul, which gives immortality. To the knowledge of this great truth Paul attained fully

and completely: he knew the way, "strait" though it was. But the flinging open of the gate, the making of that way so broad that all shall recognise it, and desire it, and see its glory, is the work of woman. It must be known as a *science*. And this will be dwelt upon when the observations of Paul on womanhood are considered.

The Second Letter to the Thessalonians.

The second letter of Paul was written at the same place, Corinth, and very shortly after the first was despatched. It is very brief, and is evidently a reply to the excited speculations of some of the converts with regard to his statement concerning the re-manifestation of the Master. He commenced with the same greeting, and then proceeded to express his "thanks to God for their faith, patience, and love, in the midst of persecution, which showed that they would receive the compensation of entering the kingdom of God, for which they suffered. Affliction would be the lot of those who persecuted them, when the Master, fully revealed himself with the angels of flaming brightness, which would be the sorrow of those who rejected the truth represented in Jesus, and could not attain to the glorious sphere of light in which he dwelt, the beauty of which would surprise even those who believed in his mission."

The literal words of the text, materialised from their true meaning, have been the terror of vast numbers of pious persons, as they are called, who have not had faith enough to believe that the Christ comprehends Divine Love, and that "vengeance" to him, or to the angelic spirits of his order, was, and is, a thing alien, abhorrent, and impossible. He was incarnated to show the way of redemption from evils, to make peace on earth possible, and immortality. The suffering of any human spirit in the unseen world comes through law, and in no other way. If the kingdom of heaven is within man,

so also are the elements of hell. Its fire is remorse, — the remorse which made the soul of Judas swept by such a wave of despair that he sought destruction. Those who think lightly of what the spirit may endure when face to face with the deeds of the body, should study spiritual laws. They would learn lessons such as they would never forget, lessons which would make them look upon injustice, cruelty, treachery, to others, as the pathway to their own hell.

Mortals who oppose God-given reforms can be so deceived that they are unable to distinguish the powers of darkness from the holy spirits. To those who become their instruments, and who have finally to face their errors and wrong-doing, they can bestow about as much sympathy as the priests of the Sanhedrin gave to Judas when he cast back the empty coins for which eternal truth had been sold, at their feet. Had Jesus of Nazareth ought to do with such anguish as this? No! Neither in the past nor in the present has he ever worked, or in any manner sent forth his influence, save for suffering humanity. It was *because* he desired to deliver man from the hell which his own ignorance creates, — because he realised that spiritual laws are inflexible, that he appeared on earth to teach the long-concealed way of deliverance.

Then Paul went on to explain something further with regard to the re-manifestation of Christ, concerning which he begged the society to hold itself free from all anxiety through any spiritual influence, or word, or letter from him. The apparently mysterious passage which has been so often used as a ground for sectarian controversy and the condemnation of others, is a simple prophecy, which was impressed on Paul as a corrective of the expression of his opinion that the return of Christ might be near. He told them to be deceived by none, — since it could not take place before the materialism which would attach itself to the faith, would work itself out. The "man of sin" might have arisen before his mind as the Roman emperor, Nero, but of what was Nero a

type? He represented material, and soulless humanity in its power and vigour, godless and loveless; content with external temples, inspiring external worship, and claiming, notwithstanding, to be divine. Paul said he had already alluded to this when he had been among them, in order that they should recognise this condition. He called it a mystery; he would have liked all men to have received the truth in its height and its beauty, and to have borne the fruit of purity and freedom in their lives. Yet it was not possible that it could thus be preserved. The very popularity of Christianity, so called, would become the means through which the spirit of Anti-Christ, or the external and material would enter.

“Already there were signs of it, but he, the apostle of true liberty restrained it from appearing among them. When he was taken away, it would be fully developed in a thousand degradations of the eternal light, which would be accepted by perishing mankind, because they had not that love of the truth which would make them free. Hence its deterioration was permitted by the powers above, because of the weakness of man, who mingled error with truth, and found pleasure in unrighteousness and earthly things. The right judgment would at last appear, and the Master, Jesus, would destroy this effort of the ‘old serpent,’ of the power of the unspiritual, by the inspiration of his own voice, and the brightness of his reappearance.”

Paul hardly realised the length of the period through which these human perversions of the mission of Christ would have to be worked out. It was impossible for him to see the various and opposed Christian churches; the persecutions of Christians among themselves; the terrors of an Inquisition, of Calvinism, of zealots of various kinds, and the war of the creed against the breath of the spirit. All he knew, and all he was impressed to record (or dictate), was, that not until all these things had been manifested would the true Christ return, and that his approach would dissolve the creeds

and barriers which man had created, into the universal knowledge of the way of Life.

There is little in the remainder of the letter which requires comment. He expressed his thankfulness that they had been, from the earliest time, led of the spirit, and believed in the truth, and begged them to stand fast in the principles he had taught. He requested their prayers for the work, and for his own and his companions' deliverance from evil men, and finally, earnestly exhorted them to discountenance those who had grown impatient, and had become a source of trouble in their refusal to work for themselves, and their interference with the labour of others. It was, very possibly, an illustration of the extremes to which those early "second-adventists" were becoming liable. Looking for the speedy return of the Master whom they revered, and beset with trials owing to their faith, they desired to relinquish the responsibilities of earth for the impossibilities of an erroneous heaven. "Be not weary," counselled Paul, "in well-doing." His simple admonitions have, alas! been the cause of that spirit of pride and excommunication which has long been the reproach of churches, and the bitterness of inspired souls. The disorderly and reckless Thessalonian convert was a man wholly different from Wycliffe, or John Huss, or George Fox, or Charles Darwin, and required, not the word of a priest dressed in a little brief authority, but the voice of common-sense.

The conclusion of the letter suggests the idea that Paul, as a rule, only signed the epistles he sent, as a proof of their authenticity. "The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle, and thus I write: the grace (or love-spirit) of our Master, Jesus, the Christ, be with you all."

The First Letter to the Society at Corinth.

The long letter bearing the above title, was written in the year 57 A.D., at Ephesus, where, as the history

of his labours has made known, Paul had many serious troubles.

He had heard, no doubt from Apollos, much that grieved him, and at last a letter was despatched from the converts themselves, by some persons of the household of Chloe, asking for advice, and evincing a spirit which showed that errors, evils, and disputes had found their way into the very heart of what should have been a pure light in the midst of the crowded, busy, pleasure-loving city. Paul's reply was taken by Stephanas, and others, and dealt with these various questions to some extent in a manner adapted to his own age, and in other respects in a way suited for all time.

The opening words were directed against the absurdities of sectarianism. Some had called themselves the especial followers of Paul; some of Apollos, some of Peter, and others of Christ; each assigning what they considered to be weighty reasons for accepting that which seemed the best presentations of, or the highest authority for, the truth. "Is Christ divided?" asked Paul. Well might he ask that question, nor has it from that day to this ever been answered. He at once expressed his thankfulness that he had baptised very few converts, so that they could not say they had been baptised in his name. Baptism, indeed, was of little moment. "Christ sent me," he wrote, "not to baptise, but to preach the truth!" Jesus himself had relinquished this extremely simple ceremony at a very early stage of his work; the gifts of the spirit, the power of spiritual influence, had preceded the sign of union with the Christian societies in the case of many converts. It might be employed as a simple sign of brotherhood. It was not necessary, certainly not "necessary to salvation." Had Paul realised the laboured arguments of future fathers upon the "efficacy" of the "sacrament of baptism," of the necessity for sprinkling infants, and further, of the sects who would be formed, and exalt certain methods of the application of cold water into the foundation-stone of their

faith, and of the "close communion" of others with them, he would have used very much stronger language. Baptism was *not* the truth, nor has its performance any connection with it, except as a mere type of the "cleansing" of the soul.

Paul asked "what end could be served by earthly disputes and arguments, or indeed any mere eloquence in words? The 'truth of the cross,' was the supreme light, and this was regarded by the world as a folly. Earthly knowledge was useless in apprehending the reality of that wisdom which was of the spirit; the Jews had looked for external signs, and had failed to recognise a Messiah who had been crucified; the Greeks had been devoted to philosophy, and the truth of the spirit was, to their minds, an absurdity. But to those who had been illuminated, Christ represented divine power and divine wisdom, for the apparent folly contained wisdom beyond that of mortals, and the apparent weakness, strength beyond all that they considered strong."

"Few of the intellectual, the great, the powerful, among human beings had recognised the truth, for its glory was not of earth, or of human conception, but of heaven. Jesus, the Christ, was divine wisdom, perfection, and a holy and redeeming power, and could not be chained to the individual interests, or oratory, or glory, of any. He had taught this "divine mystery" in its simplicity, without any of the marks of a great orator or philosopher, and in weakness which gave it to them without any embellishment. Those who were enlightened knew that this was the highest wisdom, long concealed, designed before the birth of the planet, which mere intellect had not attained, nor those who possessed authority on earth, for had they recognised it they would not have crucified the Master-spirit. This was the knowledge which was not seen by the eye, nor heard by the ear, but belonged to the soul, which alone was able to enter into the divine sphere of perfect truth. To the man of mere intellect, the inner domain of the

soul is folly, and he is incapable of understanding its power. To them, however, was known the knowledge embodied in the Christ."

He had been able, he said, "to give them but little of what he knew, because they were like infants, rather than men, and were unable to bear it. Their conduct proved their condition. Paul was only a teacher; so was Apollos; and nothing as individuals in comparison with the work, which was only this, Jesus, the Christ. He was the foundation-stone, and whatever structure was built upon it could alone survive a future destruction by its harmony with the original design. The destruction might be a loss to men, but they would be saved by its very occurrence."

The word "fire" is used to represent that spiritual power, whose breath, like visible fire, dissolves, frees from the form, liberates from imprisonment. It is lamentable to reflect that this very prophecy of the liberation and perfection of the truth, addressed to men who were already busy with sectarian disputes, should have been degraded into a sanction for the literal burning of men and women, who were supposed to be heretics, but who were Christian in their faith, their inspirations, and their love of liberty, at the stake! It is the more deplorable when we remember that these innocent beings were, of all others, those who had strength to follow in the Master's footsteps. The mental obliquity, and the spiritual death which produced this terrible perversion of the object of the "New Testament" and its gospel to man, still lives. One of the most fervid and saintly of churchmen has written these words: "The church claims not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of history, and it demands our submission to her claim. It claims to censure books, to silence authors, and to forbid discussion. . . . It must of course be obeyed without a word, and, perhaps, in process of time, it will *tacitly* recede

from its own injunctions." It was precisely this system of religion, so-called, which took Jesus to the cross. Its logic of infallible judgments and of silent recession from them, *owing* to the very work of the condemned reformers and discoverers, must, indeed, form an immense compensation for those who have suffered the horrors of the market-place throughout Europe.

Paul reminded these converts that they were "each one a divine temple containing the spirit of God. To destroy that temple was to incur an inevitable destruction; for the divine spirit was life, and to extinguish it was death. Human knowledge could not attain that spirit of life, and was therefore worthless. All things were theirs, for they were of Christ, and Christ was of God." Another perversion of this earnest appeal of Paul's for the preservation of a central reality, at the expense of all minor considerations, was the unwise contempt for science and philosophy which took possession of the early fathers. In declaring that the wisdom of the ages was embodied in the Christ, Paul stated nothing more than a fact; but the study of external nature has been part of the necessities of human conditions, and when interpreted in the light of interior science, it becomes a grand series of projections of divine forces and their varied actions. It was, indeed, impossible for him to shield himself from the idolatry of text-worship. The greater his capacity as a teacher of the work of the Nazarene, the more sure would be the future infatuation. Hard is it for man to receive light which shines from the Spirit; far more difficult is it for him to preserve it in its undimmed purity.

He observed that he cared not, himself, for the opinion of any; for, when the hour of sunlight came, "the day of the Master," a true judgment would be given even concerning the most secret things; but he trusted that individual pride and ambition would cease to influence them. Those who had taught most had been looked upon with scorn; the chief teachers had been as the least, "even as men doomed to death." "For," said

he, "*we* are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. If you desire and possess honours and a hierarchy, it has never been given to us. To the present hour we suffer from hunger and thirst, and are poorly clad, and reviled, and homeless! We toil, working with our own hands; being cursed, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being slandered, we pray; we are made as the refuse of the world, the rejected among all things, even to the present time."

He desired that "they should be as he was, careless of the praise of others, earnest only to be filled with the spirit of the Nazarene. Timothy, his faithful companion, who was like a son to him, had been sent to remind them of his teaching, and he would visit them afterwards, for he feared no opposition, and should judge for himself whether those who had been self-exalted possessed the internal power of the spirit. The kingdom of God existed not in words, but in interior power."

The immoralities of the time, and of the city, from which the converts had been rescued by the pure standard of life which had been taught to them, had crept in among their body, and there were many who had resorted to the old practices which were so deadly to the soul-life. One case Paul particularly mentioned, that of the prominent member who was living with his step-mother. He appears to have visited the offender in spirit, and he then delivered a judgment which was not acted upon, and was retracted in the second letter. The counsel to exclude the person from the society was indeed to cut him off from the best and highest influences he had ever known,—it was to deliver him to "Satan" or the "powers of darkness," in order that his example and presence should not injure his fellow-converts. But the spirit of Christ is strongest where the redeeming forces of love and forgiveness prevail, and the whole strength of the society seems to have been directed to the quiet repression of the evil, and to the restoration of the repentant man. At that time his conduct could hardly have appeared such a departure from refine-

ment and purity as it would be to us, for these Gentile converts had come out of "dark places" of the earth, and were surrounded by the common vices of oriental nations.

In a former letter Paul had advised them to refrain from associating with immoral persons; he explained that this advice applied to the converts only, for otherwise they would have to leave the world altogether. It gives a vivid picture of the social condition of the Roman empire in the century in which the Nazarene appeared. And the utmost that could be done was to work for the purity of the converts themselves. Paul could not judge those who had never joined them, and to him, no doubt, their lives of sense were incomprehensible and mysterious. They are a part of the purely physical life, uncontrolled and unpenetrated by the spirit. To the physical man *mere* sensations are pleasant, and their impulses govern him; but to the spiritual man they have no attraction, as such, at all. The forces of nature within him are latent until awakened by pure love, and even then, they become a soul-fire, consecrated to the highest ends.

The law-suits of the Corinthians show that their disputes had sometimes taken a practical form, and one very unworthy of their faith. Paul asked, as we might in nine cases out of ten in the present day, if no person could be found in a society which possessed truths which weighed the seen and unseen in the balances, who could give a just decision between the disputing individuals without their creating the scandal of a prosecution. Such actions as these, he truly pointed out, as well as the other evils, closed the pathway to the kingdom of God. "In the spirit of true freedom all things were lawful, for it was pure, but even then everything was not expedient. None of them must be deceived by thinking that there could be any freedom in promiscuous relations between the sexes. The question of meat mattered little, but the question of pure living was essential to the Christ-life. The body was not meant to

be a vehicle of sense, but of soul; the body of the Master had been incorruptible; so also might become the bodies of men."

It is possible that Paul recognised this truth, although he did not know how such a spiritualised condition could be attained. He did not understand the mystery of marriage, the twain becoming "one flesh," but he saw clearly that the body is a temple of the soul, the divine spirit, and should, therefore, be held sacred. The society had written to him with regard to marriage. Being man, all he could say was that celibacy was good, but to avoid evil, it was wise to marry, and to live together as husband and wife. It was known that Jesus had never married; hence there was a natural disposition to exalt virginity, as it is *called*. But in the true marriage of man and woman dwells the power of the ages, and the revelation of every mystery, and for the knowledge of the second pathway, the hour was not yet ripe.

The advice to the converts who were married to sceptical husbands or wives, to Jews who had been circumcised, to Gentiles who had not, to freemen and to slaves, may be passed over. It consisted of a recommendation for all to remain in the condition in which they were. A slave "was free in the spirit." Earthly relationships and earthly rites were of little moment in comparison with "observance of the commandments of God." It was the best that could be said at that time, and under the circumstances which made the new faith a thing so difficult to profess.

After this followed some further singular counsels on marriage, based upon the change which Paul believed to be imminent in the world, owing to the return of Christ. If it was wise for the married to remain as they were, so also was it for the unmarried. It was not a sin to marry, but the time was short, and henceforth those that had wives might be as though they had none: those who wept, as though they wept not, and so forth. "for the fashion of this world was passing away." The

unmarried cared more for the things of heaven, and were able to "attend upon the Master without distraction." "The father who gave his daughter in marriage did well, but he who gave her not did better." "A widow was free to marry a second time, but," said the writer, "she was happier if she remained as she was, after my judgment. And," he added, "I think that I am truly and divinely inspired in my belief."

For how many thousands of hermits, monks, monasteries, and convents these words have been responsible it is almost impossible to say. They certainly helped, no less, to create a celibate priesthood, whose ministration was necessarily exclusive of all coöperation with woman. All this may be looked upon as a reactionary outgrowth from the excesses and impurities of Rome in her decay; but it is also equally certain that individual saints were evolved at the heavy price of a masculine and materialistic religion, and at the expense of all that was most pure, spiritual, and divine. The man-priest can never be the priest of humanity. He represents wisdom alone, divorced from the spirit of love, and his wisdom rapidly deteriorates into the external and intellectual, non-creative, non-progressive, solitary, and dead. If the Eternal Soul comprehends the masculine and feminine principles, and is universally creative through their vast and never-ending action, the highest form of government, the most perfect church, the best institutions in the state, are those in which woman, as well as man, is fully and freely represented. So profound is the force of sex that within each man and each woman is contained, physically and spiritually, a duality which seems to point out the greatest of all truths, — the perfect marriage of the souls of man and woman. When of any two human beings it can truly be said that they are "*one soul*," they represent the world in body, soul, and spirit, and are in harmony with the unseen kingdom. Marriage, as it is commonly understood, is the intense effort of nature to reach this equilibrium; to use her interior forces in behalf of a higher evolution of

being, to unite perfectly and completely, to restore, and redeem, and regenerate. The result is imperfect generation, imperfect organisation, divorce, and, therefore, death; but through these immense struggles the spirit has been destined to pass until it reaches the marriage in which woman is of necessity free and equal with man. It is theosophy, not for the individual, but for the race, and its organic regeneration. For it must never be forgotten that the Master, the Rosicrucian, may be born, perhaps it should be said incarnated, as well as initiated and developed, that the new birth changes the "strait gate and the narrow way" into the grand arch which is visibly recognised by all nations. The organisations at present evolved in physical marriage do not permit of the incarnation of a grand order of beings who could change the very face of the planet. The divine fatherhood and motherhood in the self-creative man is still more sublimely represented in the divine fatherhood and motherhood of the dual soul. The first may perfect itself with infinite struggles, and create its children in the best deeds and impulses of men; the second may perfect each in the other, and create a deathless race. The power of the one is occult; of the other, that of evolution. The wisdom of the one is concealed, of the other embodied. The one, how rarely! creates a spiritualised person; the other evolves a spiritualised world. The first is the power of man; the second, the power of woman. In man the force of parentage is silent and concealed; in woman it takes form and gives birth to "the child." Therefore, the true marriage of the woman is her glory, and with her soul she crowns the man, and enables him to inherit his kingdom, and to cast out the last enemy therein.

The ecclesiastical monk knows neither the one nor the other.

The next passage, in reply to the questions of the Corinthians with regard to eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols, speaks for itself. The assertion of

the unity of the Eternal One is so clear that it is amazing it should have had so little weight with those dogmatic Trinitarians who have confused divine sonship with an exposition of the nature of Deity. As if "God" could be formulated in an Athanasian creed!

If this consideration for "weak brothers" seemed to limit their liberty, Paul reminded them that "he did not avail himself of many things which were his right, as well as that of others, lest they should form hindrances to his work for the truth. He would rather die than not preach that gospel which had been entrusted to him. He had been a slave, as it were, when he was really free in mind; a Jew to the Jew, and weak among the weak, in order that he might do all that was possible for the work given him by Jesus. It was very hard thus to extinguish self for a cause; but he had pressed forward towards the goal of his race, and so ran as that, while he was among others, he might do nothing to cause his own rejection. The Israelites of old had often failed, notwithstanding the deliverance of Moses; some of them had fallen into idolatry, and sin, and ingratitude, and their errors were a warning to those who lived in the present time. None would be tempted beyond what they were able to bear, and the worship of idols must be utterly discarded. The love-feast, with its cup of blessing, and bread, was a spiritual communion with Christ, of all the societies, which might be called his body. The Jews had, indeed, been accustomed to eat the sacrifices, and had communion with the altar, and it might be thought that eating the offerings to idols was of no consequence. But the Gentiles sacrificed not to the Eternal One, but to "demons," or undeveloped spirits, and they could not drink the cup which was a memorial of the Master, and that which was connected with idol-worship. To do so, was to come within a circle of evil influences which they might not be strong enough to resist. The law of love would guide them best as to what was expedient. Whatever they ate, or

drank, or did, it should be so done as to avoid offence, and to show their charity and sympathy for others."

This was a wise and sensible reply to that early practical difficulty, but the answer to the inquiry as to whether women might appear unveiled, and teach in their gatherings, has been one of those passages which have made the "Christian" religion forge chains for womanhood which have largely resulted in obscuring the work of Christ. Woman had received the gifts of the spirit as well as man, and although it was impossible for her to face the external dangers of such journeys as were taken by Paul, she had a right to utter her inspirations. The meetings of the converts at Corinth had been disorderly; several had been influenced to speak at once, and the lips of some had been used by certain spirits, no doubt attached to the pagan religion, to curse Jesus. And it must be remembered that the unveiled head in woman was the distinguishing mark of the Hetairæ. To a Jew it was a shameless exposure, and he held it unchaste even for woman to sing. The remarks of Paul hardly call for detailed criticism. As a Jew, and a Roman citizen, and as a man, he could not understand the equality of woman with man; their harmonious difference; the power of woman in redemption, and that both represented the image of God,—in the mystery of the principles of His own being, both masculine and feminine. The legend, or myth, of the fall had led him to believe that woman was created for man. Science teaches the eternity of the existence of the "male and female." They range from the atom to the archangel; from the Invisible Cause to the insect on the planet. Everything has sex. It is the key of life in the universe; the inner chamber of the temple, the holy of holies. This masculine philosophy with regard to womanhood completed what the idea of the sanctity of celibacy had begun. Alas! if it was *believed* to be a shame in the past for woman to speak in the "church," it has been *proved* to be a shame that

she has not taught in it. Pulpits teem all over Europe and America, with preaching men, but where is the voice of the Master? The churches of Christendom are worse than useless amid cities which are becoming moral hells, owing to the silence of woman, and the negation of all that she represents.

The animadversions of Paul on the suppers,—supposed to have been held in memory of the last supper of Jesus, at Jerusalem,—at which some seemed to be gluttonous, and others drunken, were no doubt necessary. So far as they were preserved from deteriorating into an empty ceremonial, it was a beautiful memorial of the last address of Jesus to his chosen companions, to be observed so long as it was of any use, or so long as it linked the early Christians together as brothers and sisters in a sacred order. But it was better to give it up than to act in such a way as to prevent the presence of those holy spirits who loved to gather around the little groups and strengthen them with their blessing. The statement that these disorderly persons were “guilty of the blood of the Master,” was intended as an earnest rebuke, and not as a literal crime, or a proof of “transubstantiation.” Familiarity with the peculiar fire with which Paul often expressed himself, ought to have shown the spirit of his language. With regard to the ill-health of those who ate and drank too much at the love-feasts, it may be accounted for in the conditions which prevented their spiritual development, and in the same habits of intoxication and gluttony which prevailed, not only at the supper, but at other times.

That the condition of the converts was very imperfect and subject to dangerous influx from the earth-sphere, is clear from what follows. It has already been stated that the lips of some were used to curse Jesus. Paul pointed out that “none could understand Jesus to be the Christ except through a holy influence. Therefore none could curse him who possessed it. There might be many kinds of spiritual gifts, but they came through the same power, and they were given for their develop-

ment. Some possessed inspiration ; some a knowledge beyond their normal capacity ; some had a profound and courageous faith ; some the capacity to heal diseases ; some different languages ; some the interpretation of them ; but all proceeded from the same source, the holy spirits, whose divine influence they had experienced. They were *one* in their work for Christ, and in that unity all members had become brothers, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free. Each member was essential to the whole. Some had been the pioneers, or apostles ; some had become endowed with prophetic insight ; some were teachers ; through some spiritual manifestations took place, healings, administrative faculty, wise counsels, languages. All did not possess these things, but there was a gift which was greater than all these, and it was the spirit of Love." The inspired appeal in behalf of this is worth all that had gone before. And yet Paul was pleading for an impossibility. For he spoke of the principle which woman represents in humanity, and before it can be manifested it must be born into it and become a second nature. It is the Christ-spirit, the angel in man awaiting its incorporation into his innermost being.

"If I speak," said Paul, "with the tongues of men, or of angels, and have not love, I am but a sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and possess the faith which moves mountains, and have not love, I am nothing ! And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love envieth not ; it knows no pride ; it is calm ; it works not for self ; it rises above anger ; it passes over wrongs ; in evil it bears no part, but it rejoices in the truth ; it bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and never fails. Prophecies shall die in their fulfilment ; the language of men shall cease ; science shall vanish. For they belong to imperfection, and in the future they shall be required no more. For

the thoughts of childhood are lost in the life of the man. The eternal gifts of faith, hope, and love remain, but the greatest of these is love."

These beautiful words must have emanated directly from the spirit of Jesus, who knew, as no other did, what love might be in the human race. Even martyrdom is useless if it proceeds from a courage which is strong in itself, but loveless to others. The Nazarene had shown his love for man by praying for his blind and cruel judges: the strength of his nature shone most brightly on the cross; he had no word of reproach even for Judas. His lips were as pure from slander, as his heart from hatred. Oh! son of Mary! thine eyes of love have filled with tears over the betrayal of thy "little ones," to whom in the hour of their extremity a cup of cold water has been denied. What has been the cause? The absence of the spirit of love!

The chapter or section which follows is again devoted to spiritual manifestations, and their regulation. Some of them were an aid in convincing the incredulous, such as speaking in a foreign language, the utterance of a prophecy, the description of a vision. The secrets of the life of the unbeliever who entered the meeting could be read, and he would join in the worship of the true God. Of the injunction on woman to be silent it is needless to speak further. The hour of her freedom had not yet rung forth. Paul wrote at his will, and the angels saw that she would herself discover the secret of the Christ, and draw forth the consecrated sword of her own liberty from beneath the very altar where man, alone, had so long knelt and prayed in vain.

The close of the long letter is devoted to the consideration of that proof of immortality which had been given in the work of Christ, and which some had failed to understand in the light of a common hope. Paul recalled to their minds "how Christ had died in order to destroy the power of evil; how he had re-appeared to Peter; to twelve others; to five hundred persons at

once, of whom the greater number were alive at the time he wrote; then to James; then to all his companions on earth; and finally to himself. Alluding with remorse to his former persecution of some of these very persons, he states that he had preached that gospel, and they had themselves believed in it." The difficulty was in the question of the "resurrection" of the body; for Jesus not only gave a proof of immortal life, but that higher immortality which is not subject to corruption. His first explanation was void of this distinction, and was simply based upon the fact that Jesus had "risen from the dead." "If Christ has not arisen," he said, "then our preaching has been in vain, and so also is your faith Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ" (converts who have died) "have perished." Reflecting upon what they had endured, on all he had suffered himself, for the truth, he added, "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." He had entered upon the subject which of all others Jesus desired to be made known to the people, and as the closing sentences were penned, an influence so pure, so sublime, and so thrilling with the notes of victory fell upon him, that the grandest inspiration of all that he ever said or ever wrote, was recorded, and made that chapter glorious with the truth of immortality.

In order must the passages be taken, for they contained a wisdom beyond that possessed by Paul.

"Christ has arisen among those who have died; the first-fruit of dying manhood."

"For since in man exists the law of death, in man also is the power of immortality."

"As in Adam, or the 'first humanity,' all die, so in Christ, or the second humanity, will all live."

"But it will take place in order, and according to law; Christ the first-fruits; and then those who have passed through the pathway to eternal life; and after this, the perfect consummation."

"For he will deliver up the kingdom to the divine rule, when earthly authority and power will cease, as well as all that is opposed to it, or are enemies to it."

"THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH!"

"All that is material is placed in subjection to him. And when all things are subject to the law of the Christ-man, then will the Christ relinquish the guidance of the earth, for it will be in direct communion with the divine."

"It is for this belief," said Paul, "that we stand in peril every hour." "As for himself, he died daily. Those who doubted might desire to live and perish as animals, as the materialist philosophers taught, but they would be deceived, and must awake to the necessity of living for the life beyond."

"Some one would say, 'How do the dead live, and what kind of body do they possess?' Oh! foolish one! what is sown in the earth does not become quickened unless the husk dies; and you sow, not the growth that shall be, but the simple grain. There are many kinds of forms; even on the earth we know the forms of men, and of animals, of birds, and of the tenants of the sea. There are also forms of heaven as well as forms of earth; but the glory of the spiritual body is of one kind, and the glory of the physical body of another. There is one beauty of the sun, and another of the moon, and another of the stars. So also is the difference in the condition of the life after death. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, *it is raised a spiritual body*. There is a physical body, and there is a spiritual body. And yet more. It is written: 'The first order of humanity (Adam) became living souls; the last order become life-giving SPIRITS.' But the spiritual is preceded by the physical, and the spiritual is the last. The first man is of the earth; the second man is of heaven. Those who are of earth are of the

first order; those who are of the spiritual world are of heaven. As we have borne the forms of the physical, we shall also bear the forms of the spiritual."

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption. I speak of a mystery! All will not die, but will become changed; it will be at the sound of the last angel, for it will go forth, and the dying race will become incorruptible and will be changed!¹ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And *when* this corruptible form shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal body its immortality, then will be fulfilled the saying 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where is thy victory? Oh, grave, where is thy sting!'"

"The cause of death is sin; and the power of sin makes it a law. But let us give thanks to God, who gives us the victory through the Master, Jesus, the Christ."

Can anything be more clearly expressed than the description of these two immortalities; first, the spirit, surviving the body, and able to enter upon immortal life; secondly, the spiritual man, who will surmount the law of sin and death; first, the man of earth, and, secondly, the angel-man, or Christ. If Paul died daily; if he suffered all things; if he had converts who tried him almost as much as his fellow-countrymen, and their hatred and rage; if he misunderstood womanhood, and wrote many things for his own time, and according to his own impressions and beliefs; yet he accomplished one eternal work, — he left an imperishable inspiration on immortality, which has gone forth to all nations, and has laid the foundation of the coming knowledge of the destiny of the human race, and the re-manifestation of the Christ.

¹ Paul spoke of it as a sudden change, like that which occurs after the crisis of death, but the necessary processes of organic development will be gradual.

The Second Letter to the Society at Corinth.

The last letter closed with personal matters; contributions of money for those at Jerusalem; the intended journey of Paul through Macedonia, and his possible visit to Corinth; his work at Ephesus, where there was much to accomplish, as well as much to encounter; the probability of a visit to them from Timothy, who was still very young, and the refusal of Apollos to accept their invitation immediately. The labours of Stephanas and others Paul praised, and recommended them and their work, requesting that they would give their efforts due consideration. Then followed his autograph, — “The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand.”

It is unfortunate that he should have added, “If any man love not the Master, let him be anathema.” His blindness would indeed be his own curse, but Jesus came not to curse, but to bless, and the pronouncement of any formal condemnation on those who saw not, and loved not the light, was far from the spirit of Christ. It must never be forgotten that, throughout these letters, the thoughts and the will of an intense and zealous man were mingled with powerful and majestic inspirations from higher sources.

In the close of the same year, 57, A.D., or early in the following one, and in the course of his journey, he wrote, at some unknown place, the second letter. The formal greeting need no longer be dwelt upon, and the whole of what follows may be with advantage greatly condensed, since it is chiefly connected with the troubles and the events of the past. Yet it is one of the greatest essentials to any approach to a true apprehension of the letters of Paul, that they should be freely translated into language removed from the conventionalities of old English phraseology. So often have the words been repeated that they have, as a rule, become almost meaningless through extreme familiarity, while the popular ignorance of events, conditions, and trials which are remote from the experiences of the great majority of

persons, have trained them to regard Paul as an impossible and supernatural "church apostle," and not as a man who was looked upon as a heretic, the follower of a despised and misunderstood Nazarene, and whose courage of belief and free expressions they would, under any less familiar guise, recoil from with angry disdain. Paul was the free-thinker and theosophical "spiritualist" of his age. Therefore he was cursed by the Jews, and scorned by the Romans. His apotheosis has been even more unfortunate in the interests of truth, than his martyrdom. It has inflicted wrongs on truth-speakers and reformers, on woman, and on society, which can never be measured. Their source has been the collective "church," (in which may be included almost all sects), which has emanated from and may, in a sense, be included in the church of Rome. Therefore, in speaking of the early converts and the various associations founded by Paul, it is better to use a word which has been less perverted. For the popular "church" deals with sterile theology, and has grown out of libraries, of speculations, and numberless side-issues, and a combination of awe on one side, and tyranny on the other, with which we have nothing to do. What the Jewish traditions, and "vain repetitions," of which Jesus spoke, were to the Pharisees, such have been the writings of the fathers, the councils, the creeds, and the prayer-books and works of divines, to the Christians of our own day. The parallel may be resisted, but it is nevertheless perfect, and it is almost as difficult for the voice of the Spirit to be heard in the nineteenth century as it was in the first.

At that period paganism was dead. So was Judaism. And the Sadducee in Jerusalem had his counterpart in the philosopher of Rome. To the Roman boy, Tartarus had become a joke; to the Roman thinker the gods were fables. Lucretius "sought to disengage the souls of the chained from religions"; Cicero considered paganism as being without "heart or mind;" Lucillus mocked at both gods and men. And materialism had

borne, as now, its own fruit in the emphatic assertion of the physical senses. The vestal virgin, the priestess unapproachable in her chastity, had vanished out of sight, and the oracles were dumb. Wealth, contact with oriental life, the multiplication of slaves, and the increase of empire, were destroying the old spiritual life of Rome. And what of the present? What of these mighty cities which have arisen all over the world, and amid which are still to be seen the clustered spires of the churches consecrated to "Christian worship?" Are they becoming centres of vice or virtue? What of their streets? What of man? What, alas! of woman? Of what nature are the undercurrents of apparently respectable social life? Are there no counterparts of the pictures of Pompeii? Are not tons of wretched literature seized and destroyed in London and New York? Mark woman, with her repressed love-nature, and the directions in which her emotions, untrained, unconsecrated to their high offices, are expressed. Mark man, with his refusal to give her liberty of thought and action, and his own enslavement to the lower, and blindness to the higher, nature. Confession? What is the use of it? Are Catholics purer than Protestants, — the cities of continental Europe less filled with the sphere of sense than those of England and America, or the country of Luther? Societies for the suppression of vice? Of what service are they when the desire for material pleasures exists in the spirit within? It is the old struggle of soul with sense over again, with this difference: that earthly and external science has reached a point from which a great ascent or a rapid deterioration is inevitable. Never before has the race acquired an organisation so sensitive, so generally developed in nerve and brain, as in the countries of modern civilisation. It will create its own hell, and consume itself in its own fire, unless the powers of the soul send forth their sacred influences, and control the physical nature in her innermost recesses. It is the immortal pathway taught by Jesus of Nazareth, and the sole redemption. Even in the very atmosphere may be

breathed out the spirit of life, while from scenes and lives of impurity there are sent abroad waves of contagion and disease, epidemics and death. The science of the soul is the supreme science; the kingdom of God within; the way, the truth, and the life. What Paul did in the old days, for the sake of the work of the Master, must be done with a more potent and irresistible force by woman. Man can erect churches, and found wide-spread organisations, build steamers, and vessels, and locomotives, and perfect every external appliance for the indirect control of the material, but alone, he cannot inherit or unfold the divine kingdom, for the motherhood of woman is the sole pathway to it, and she alone can wrest and cast down those powers of darkness which seek to conceal it from the knowledge of mankind.

In the very letters of Paul are contained the sanction for this new "apostleship" of woman, for, whenever he writes of love, and liberty, and immortality, he prophecies of the life which comes through womanhood, with all it includes, and of which it is a type.

It has already been said that there is no need to dwell at any great length on the contents of this second letter to these early converts at Corinth. Much of it gives expression to those anxieties and sufferings, which, indeed, were great. As firm as ever, as anxious to rejoice, as assured as before of the righteousness of his cause, and as desirous to be patient, there seems to breathe through these pages the deep sound of a human sigh. Every reformer has his Gethsemane. Paul unquestionably had his. What he said speaks for itself. "His recent troubles had made him despair of life. There had been reasons why he had not visited them, and his change of purpose arose from no fickleness, for he had never, in any part of his work, said 'yes' to-day, and 'no' to-morrow, and had ever remained firm in Jesus, the Christ. Doubtless there had been a dispute with regard to the specially-mentioned offender in the society, and he admitted that it was better to forgive him, and

treat him with love. If they forgave him, so did he, and thus there could be no ground for any veiled opposition among the Judaic party." The word "Satan" is used,—always a synonym for opposition to truth, whether among spirits or mortals. The numerous accusations against Paul are manifest from his various allusions, and his earnest appeals for liberty. He "had sent no secret messages or letters to any of them. The absence of Titus had tried him deeply. He had asked for no letters of recommendation as some" (the Judaisers) "had, for they were his letter, a letter written by the spirit, and on their inmost hearts. Strength had been given him to be the teacher of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life."

"If the old law, which had no power to deliver from death had been glorious, should not the work of the spirit be far more so? If what condemned man by its very regulations had been great, far greater was that which delivered from all such condemnation. The one had passed away; that which was eternal was far beyond it. Realising this, he spoke boldly, and used no veil to hide the light, as Moses did, which, indeed, remained unremoved from the sight of the Jews, for it was taken away in Christ." "Like a mirror they all reflected him and grew into his likeness. He did not grow faint-hearted, nor could he descend to aught that was deceitful, or to any betrayal of the divine truth, which made known its worth to all. The gospel could only be veiled among these who were perishing, and who were engulfed in the external, and earthly things, and could not recognise the light of the Christ, or divine image. He had taught no opinion of his own on this subject but that Jesus was the Christ, whose light in the darkness had been divinely foretold. It was a grand treasure contained in frail, or mortal teachers, but this showed its power all the more. For, oppressed on every side, they were not cast down; troubled, they did not despair; hunted about, they were never forsaken; overthrown,

they were still preserved; and this very crucifixion made all the more clear the life and power of Jesus. If he often, as it were, died, it was to give new life to them; he taught because he believed, and realised that the Master would aid him to pass into the immortal life, as well as themselves. No! he renewed his courage; for, although physically he was growing weaker, yet his spirit was daily gaining strength. And the brief affliction of the present was only producing an eternal and glorious recompense, which lifted his eyes to the unseen world. He knew that if he died, he should pass into a heavenly home, and, indeed, sometimes he longed for it, if he could but feel that he was ready, and fully ripe. For, in the mortal life there were many troubles, and it would be a happiness to exchange the mortal body, for the immortal one that lives. For the sake of this very thing he had received the inspiration of the Spirit. Whether they were in the earthly form, or had passed out of it, the one course was to lead a righteous life. For everything would be revealed in the spiritual condition, of which Christ was the great standard, or 'judgment,' and each one would realise, by an eternal law, the result of his actions, whether they were good or evil. Knowing this, and that there was no escape from the consequences of life in the body, he had done his best to teach others. They should, therefore, trust him, and could surely answer his accusers. If he were 'insane,' it was for the sake of a divine truth; and if not, he was able to live for them. The motive which impelled him was love of the Master, and a recognition of his love for men; because he had sacrificed himself for all, in order that all men should live, not in the spirit of self, but in the great spirit of that love which is the Christ. Therefore, he could not recognise any authority based on earthly relationships or acquaintance with Jesus; and even though he had himself seen him, he claimed nothing on that ground, but because the life of Christ in man means a new creation, in which old things have passed away, and all things have become new. It had been a

divine design, in which they had been shown how man enters into an *at-one-ment* with God, through the Christ-who thus delivered him from the power of sin and weakness, and presented the truth of the higher life,—the ‘reconciliation’ of the human with the divine.”

“Those who were the teachers,” Paul went on, “were therefore the mediums of the work of Christ, which was truly divine, and he entreated them to accept it. The unstained and innocent Man had become a criminal for their sakes, that all might attain to his perfection. As his workers, they earnestly trusted that they would carry this knowledge into practice, and at the present hour, for that was theirs, and might be their salvation, doing nothing to hinder the spread of the truth, but in all things consecrating themselves to it in patience, through every affliction, and in the face of want, dire necessities, stripes, imprisonment, or riots, and with earnest labour, and watchfulness; in a holy spirit, in true love, in the courteous utterance of truth, in divine power; wearing the armour of a holy life on the right and on the left, going onwards through honour or disgrace, through evil reports or good; called deceivers while they were yet true; known as the rejected of earth, yet working for the world; apparently perishing, yet filled with life; persecuted, but not destroyed; suffering anguish, but realising joy; remaining poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

It was a high ideal of the strong spiritual force which entered into the pathway, and perhaps few of the converts ever attained to it in the degree realised by Paul. It was a *warfare* rather than a life of happiness and rest; but, in its future perfection, the life of the soul will overcome all the opposing elements of earth, and dwell in a peace which words can neither utter nor explain.

“He had no narrow views to give them, and they could reward him by a similar spirit of liberty. It was well not to be intimately associated with those who did not believe the truth, since there could be no harmony between light and darkness. The divine temple had

nothing in common with idolatry, and they were themselves a temple of the divine life, in the midst of which was God, whose sons and daughters they might be. Knowing this, they should hold themselves pure from all corruption within and without, and aspire to the highest and the best. They should receive his teaching; for he had wronged no man, ruined none, injured none, although he did not allude to such false accusations and their result, in condemnation of themselves, for they would live and die in his heart. He had spoken very plainly and boldly, for they had been a comfort to him in the midst of his troubles in Macedonia, when, beset by strife without, and fears within. But he had received the account from Titus as an answer from God, and he had told him all about their love and sympathy and interest for him. If his former letter had grieved them, he had not entirely regretted it, for it would be only for a short time. A sorrow which impelled to reform, unlike the merely selfish grief which led to death, was a matter for joy, so that they had lost nothing. The result had shown their earnestness, and their endeavour to do what was right, and it was to test this condition, rather than to concern himself with individual wrong-doing, that he had written as he had done. Titus had been so pleased that it had also cheered him, and their respectful reception of him had shown that they were not willing to humiliate their old teacher. This had greatly encouraged him."

"He felt able to mention another subject. The Macedonian societies, which were very poor, and had been greatly persecuted, had contributed liberally to the fund for the poorer workers at Jerusalem, and he had requested Titus to arrange with them also for similar help, so that, as they possessed faith, the power to teach, wisdom, earnestness, and love for him, they might add to it all the gift of benevolence. The Master had become poor to make them rich, and they were followers of him."

And so forth. It is unnecessary to proceed further,

since this is a sufficient proof of Paul's anxiety to carry out his promise to the old society in Jerusalem.

"He had preferred that Titus and a companion should act in the matter, so that he should appear in an honourable light before others. In their characters he had every confidence, and they could entrust their contributions to them. Already their society had been mentioned to others as reliable helpers, so that they would all understand his desire that they should appear so, and the money was an absolute necessity for the daily wants of their poor brothers."

There seems at the close of this subject to have been a pause in the letter, which recommenced in a very different manner. If Paul dictated nearly all his letters, they must have been very slowly written, and subject to many interruptions and disconnections. Before the conclusion of this second epistle he may have heard, or reflected over, something which caused him vexation; or he may have been troubled by some event which is not recorded, any or all of which reasons would account for the change of topic, and change of mood.

"He would," he said, "gently remind them, that although he was said to be weak in appearance and personal presence, and only courageous in his letters, that he had no desire to show by any external signs the courage which he knew he possessed. He trusted he should not manifest that courage in any other way than in the spirit; his work was not a question of physical boldness, but of that stronger power which overthrew strongholds, and the logic of the world, and the pride which blindly exalted itself against a divine wisdom. If any persons thought he was nearer to Christ through any earthly connection with him, he had only to reply that he was of Christ just as fully as they were. He could point to the same commission, which was for the purpose, not of rebuking, but of strengthening, but he should neither express, nor exercise, any authority in his letters. Some had said, "He writes powerfully, but his appearance is feeble, and he is unable to speak

well." To this he would say that he was as strong as he wrote, but that comparisons and self-exaltation were distasteful to him, and showed a want of sense and insight into the work. It did not become him to point to his efforts or his travels, nor had he in any way entered into the sphere of the labours of others, or endeavoured to proclaim his superiority in places unconnected with himself."

This was precisely what his critics had done themselves, and Paul left the unpleasant theme of purely personal comparisons with the wise counsel to "take pride, not in the idea of self, but in the Master's work. Whoever was approved by him, had a sufficient recommendation."

"He trusted that they would bear with the folly of any allusion to such a subject, because he feared that this pointed to an opposition which would seek to destroy the purity and simplicity of the truth. If those who had come to them had received another gospel, different from his, they would do well to receive their authority, but this was not the case. They professed to teach the same Christ, in whom there could only be a harmony of truth. As a teacher, he was equal to any of the others. And if he could not speak with ability, he nevertheless possessed the necessary wisdom, of which their own lives furnished a testimony. Perhaps he had done wrong in giving services gratuitously to them alone, which had been remunerated by other societies. He had been in want among them, and had refrained from making himself a burden. And yet, in Achaia, of all provinces, he was accused of doing the very thing which his critics had done, and he had not. If they had condemned him, they had certainly condemned themselves."

Fired with the littleness of these miserable attempts to destroy a noble mission, Paul expressed his anger in a few burning words.

"Men of this kind were false teachers; deceit was in their work, although they claimed to be the representa-

tives of the Master. Nor was this to be wondered at, for the powers of darkness were so subtle, the opposition to the Christ-work so intense, that they could appear in the form of angels of light. It was not to be surprised at, therefore, if those who were connected with this opposition should appear in the same form."

All reformers realise that saddest of all experiences, the recognition of the Judas as among those "of their own household," and yet it is the last effort of the earth-bound spirits, to destroy any marked influx of light to the people. These formidable bands of spirits well know that the Truth can only be assailed by treachery, and to subdue their instruments, who would recoil with horror from their presence if they realised their true nature, they employ subtle and silent influences until the time is ripe for them to appear as "the light" themselves, and to demand the betrayal of those who have been truly called of God. Who can be protected from these fearful "dwellers on the threshold," who await the approach of the instructed ones? All may be. And what is the protection? The heart of love. This comprehends all that Paul described in his first letter, in which he declared that it was the greatest of all the gifts of God to man. Be warned, all ye who are standing on the borders of the unseen life, and who desire to be the reformers of earth! If you commit a single wrong or injustice to any fellow-worker, or fellow-martyr, you CANNOT work for the Christ and his angels, nor have you even the power to teach your fellows, or to minister in their behalf. Better a thousand times is it to break stones upon the common road, to wash floors for daily bread, to live and die in the humblest obscurity, than to accomplish a single deed in behalf of reform, which is built upon persecution! The gospel of Judas, for the glory of Palestine, led to a hell.

The more defenceless the light-bearer is, the more liable to excite the prejudice of the hour, to be condemned by the verdict of the moment, the greater is the wrong committed. To atone for wrongs while in

the form, is the sole escape from that dread ordeal of remorse which is worse than any crucifixion, because it is not sacrifice, but the sorrow and darkness of the awakened soul.

Paul was certainly capable of defending himself among the opposing converts, and so far they were free from that crime which betrays when no defence is possible, from the very nature of the reform. Jesus of Nazareth was silent. There could be no answer to the inflamed religious zeal of those who cried "Away with him! Crucify him!" Truth and liberty cannot be defended, for they are contrary to the conceptions of the world. Man dreams that mere intellect can ascertain truth; that liberty is created by laws. In the view of the angels, the planet on which physical man exists is a prison, which is filled with error. Therefore it is that when the Soul "comes unto her own she receives her not," and truth itself only serves to make visible the darkness, and the depth of the opposition to it.

The poor, much-tried teacher plainly owned his folly in replying to the pride of those who were evidently attracted to the Jewish party. "Since they had borne so much from other apostles, who were able to enslave them, perhaps," he observed, "they would bear with him. If they were Hebrews, he too was one; if they were Israelites, he was one also; if they were descended from Abraham, such also was his descent; if they worked for Christ, what had not he also endured and suffered?" The story of these sufferings has already been recounted, the passage itself has been quoted, at the close of the history of the labours of Paul, and it contains the pathos, not of poetical eloquence, but of literal fact. He added, he "had the daily anxiety of all the societies he had founded in addition. It was no wonder he wrote in weakness for the sake of those who were weak, and felt indignation at the obstacles placed in their pathway. The very anxiety which had made him weak, was, he thought, his glory. God knew he told no falsehood!" And then he remem-

bered his experience at Damascus, and fortunately inserted it, recalling how "he had escaped from the watched and guarded city by being let down the wall in a basket." Such walls are to be seen there now. And those familiar with the East have stood in the modern town, and thought of the poor fugitive of centuries ago, whose life-story has made it hallowed ground.

The whole tenor of all his observations was to refute the utterly unjust criticisms which had been made upon him. The frail and weak-looking man had been strong enough for anything and everything in the interests of his cause. It was well that he pointed out the danger of treachery among fellow-workers, and its consequences. The warning was wanted then, and it is required now. Therefore he was impelled to write what a future age would understand. With regard to spiritual gifts, he possessed them in a degree which few had recognised. "Fourteen years before, he had fallen into a trance in which his consciousness of life in the spiritual world was so real, that it seemed to him as if he were there in his material form; he had passed into what he described as the 'third heaven,' " that is, one of the higher spheres of the unseen world which surrounds our globe. "There he had heard utterances which could not be formulated into human language; he knew that the world he beheld appeared as a paradise, so full of beauty were its scenes, and so grand and pure." This experience of Paul's which seemed to him so strange, and which perhaps at that time was a very unusual one except among the few who had been trained in ancient orders, will become very common as the development of man progresses. Before he becomes a Spirit endowed with Will, he will be as familiar with the scenes and the friends of the spiritual spheres to which he is attracted, as he will be with those of earth. Long before death is finally destroyed, that crisis will cease to be a separation, or a cause of grief. Knowledge will remove all mysteries.

The singular allusion to some trial which he was permitted to suffer as a check to pride has been often commented upon. The connection of the "thorn" with his visions, and inspirations, was probably an idea of his own, since he had humiliations enough among his fellow-creatures to protect him from any feeling of vanity. Many conjectures have been made, but there is not the slightest ground for any other explanation than that of a weakness of sight, or some distressing suffering to which he was liable in his eyes. He had been partially blind for a time, after the vision on the road to Damascus; his companions often led him from place to place, and never seem to have left him alone; he alludes, himself, to the sympathy of some of the converts during some sickness which would have made them "pluck out their eyes" for him; and as a rule he seemed only to have signed his letters with his own hand. The letter that he wrote himself he specially remarked upon, — "you see how long a letter I have written to you with my own hand." This must have been no slight "thorn," considering the dangerous journeys, the crowds of people, the public career, which he had to face. He might see well enough to write on rare occasions, while audiences, scenes through which he passed, and everything not close to his eyes, were indistinguishable. Knowing the power of the Master, he had prayed many times that he would remove this trouble, which seemed to him like an obstacle to his efforts, and therefore a "messenger of Satan." But Jesus had replied, "I will give you strength, and my power shall be all the greater through your weakness." With this assurance Paul had grown content, and no doubt he often felt that weakness transformed to strength. "So," said he, "in *weaknesses*, and wrongs, and persecutions I may triumph! — for when I am weak then I become strong!"

"But," he proceeded, "all this was foolish! — only it had been forced upon him. It was for them to commend him, for he was on an equality with any

of the chief teachers; the signs of his mission had been witnessed, and many spiritual manifestations. They certainly were in no way inferior to any of the other societies except that he had asked nothing from them. Had that been a wrong? If so, it would be committed over again, since he would gladly spend and be spent for their benefit, and had shown he had regarded them with all the greater affection, which certainly should not make them love him the less. This, it had been said, was his "cunning." But had he ever received any advantage from them, or had Titus, or his companion? Had not they acted as he had done? No explanation was needed on his own account, but it was necessary to refute such accusations for the sake of the cause of Jesus. It was for their own good. For he feared they might be led to fall from their high standard, and that he should find when he again visited them that there were strife, jealousy, anger, divisions, slanders, whispers of calumny, inflation, and disorders, which would be indeed a humiliation to him, and might lead to his having to mourn over their receding into the old vices with which they had once been so familiar. This third intention of his to visit them, was like a third witness, who confirmed the evidence. So that if he did visit them, he should speak plainly, and give them a proof that Christ did speak through him, and that there was no weakness in him. For although he, also, had been crucified in weakness, yet he lived in divine power, and that power he should share. They could test themselves, — as to whether the spirit of Christ was in them, unless they had altogether failed. This they ought to know had not been the case with him. But he prayed that they might be kept from all evil, and act uprightly in all their conduct, whatever was said or thought of himself. None could work in opposition to the truth, and as for himself, he rejoiced in their strength whatever weakness might be attributed to him, and only prayed for their perfection. On this account he

had written while absent, in order that when he next saw them there would be no ground for rebukes in the exercise of that mission whose power was consecrated to building up, and not to tearing asunder."

The last words are very beautiful, and ascend once more into the fearless calmness and love which form the true sphere of the teacher. "Finally, brothers, farewell! Go onwards! Be comforted; live in harmony and in peace, and the Eternal One, who is love and peace, will breathe among you. Give to each other the kiss of peace! All the true brothers send you their greeting. The gentle strength of the Master, Jesus, the Christ, and the divine love of the Eternal One, and the influence of the holy spirits, be with you all!"

There is no need for comment. The letter tells its own tale. The liberty which Paul had been guarding at all costs, and for which he had paid such a fearful price, had inspired a feeling of hatred, and the growth of slanders, which pierced him to the heart. We guess the nature of the unkindly sneers from the remarks which he thought it almost a weakness to record. And this was in the very midst of the followers of the Nazarene. What there was in the personal aspect of Paul which drew forth criticisms so unworthy, is not known. Detraction has a thousand voices. Spies were sent after him; he was watched; every effort was made to destroy the sacred mission of his life; to injure his character, and to ruin him. With such experiences, what should be the verdict on such a communication, written in the midst of external strife which was familiar as the dawn of the day? Surely that the Master was indeed his inspiration, and lifted him above the plane of any real bitterness. Paul, without Jesus of Nazareth, is a mystery time can never solve; he was the greatest witness of his existence, and on his firmness, amid a thousand trials of faith, depended at that period, far more than is supposed, the fate of the race of man.

The Letter to the Converts in Galatia.

Only a few months after the second letter to Corinth had been despatched, the resistance to Paul's teaching, which had been the secret cause of the calumnies against him, rose to its height in Galatia, and displayed its true character.

It drew forth from him the strongest declaration of principles pledged to freedom that he ever penned, and rescued the Gentiles from that ceremonialism, which under the guise of symbolic significance, ever attaches to external rules and regulations a value they can never possess. The last stronghold of ceremonial observance is the belief that they make known esoteric truths which have only to be proclaimed to the people to re-awaken their interest and ensure their submission to an ecclesiastical system. But the Christ is manifested to destroy mystery; to draw forth from mysticism the enshrined reality; to make truth the common property of all men, and to make it so clear and so simple that the principles of the Pathway shall be universally recognised. Hence he can be represented in no sectarian religions, but is the Teacher of humanity, and links men together, not by their theologies and exterior practices, but by the light diffused among the seers of every land, which pointed towards the sunlight of the day. The soul is subject to the same laws in every land, and among every people.

There is no doubt that the Levitical law was earnestly pressed on the Gentiles by some of those Pharisees of Jerusalem who had become followers of James, because it contained sacred and valuable mysteries which were worthy of preservation. That law had been a vast depository of esoteric truths, pointing out the work of the Messiah. Therefore it should be revered, especially as it held a sort of mediatorial office between the Messiah and uninstructed persons who required such aids to purify, and exalt, and guide, their daily lives. These are always the ingenious arguments of priests, who for-

get that the supreme revelation is given for the express purpose of making man his own priest, and his own temple, and of revealing to him the glory of the shekinah within him. Christianity became possible, and grew in proportion to the decline of Judaism. The Christ-reign will become possible, and be inaugurated in proportion to the decline of ecclesiasticism. New life cannot be chained to dead bodies, nor do works of love and mercy require the rituals and superintendence of monks. The religions of earth win their immortality by throwing off ceremonies, and attaining to the perfection which has been the dim and obscured ideal of them all.

The contents of this letter of Paul's, or rather decree of emancipation, are so clear that observations are almost unnecessary. The rite in dispute was that of circumcision, but it included, and meant, Judaism, and the struggle was of paramount importance. He commenced by stating that he was a teacher, not man-appointed, but called by Christ, the Immortal One, and greeted the Galatians in the name of the Master "who had sacrificed himself to deliver man from earthly evils, according to the divine will." Then he expressed his surprise that they had so soon receded from the gospel, or truth of Christ, to another gospel, which indeed could not be called such, but was only thus represented by persons who troubled them. With emphatic boldness in the cause of freedom he wrote, "If I, or an angel from heaven should teach any other truth than that already made known, it is accursed!" It was very strong language, but was born out of the dire necessity of the hour. He asked if they could say he was now trying to please men rather than God? If he had sought popularity, the last thing he should have become was a follower of the Master.

He proceeded to refer to those circumstances in his life which showed that his conversion, and the truth he recognised were of no human origin; his early bigotry and cruelty manifested in the interests, and for the sake

of that very Judaism, and the traditions of his fathers, which afterwards seemed so narrow; the visit to Jerusalem in which he took Titus, the uncircumcised Gentile with him, the strife which it had occasioned, and his firm position with regard to it; that to him it had been given to teach the truth in liberty, and not that Judaic form of it which had been recognised by Peter and others; from whom he had received no guidance whatever; that he had been welcomed and acknowledged by all the leaders at Jerusalem, and that after this, when Peter visited Antioch, the inconsistency of his conduct and its influence over many others had drawn from him an open reproof, in which he pointed out that the Levitical ceremonials could never evolve the interior or perfect life, but only faith in, or realisation of the Christ-principle. That freedom, however, was not license, but purity, for Christ could not be a guide to anything that was evil. To rebuild what had been destroyed would only be to return to the old plane, and to show the weakness of his nature. For he had only ceased to recognise the old law because he could live the divine life; he had been crucified with Christ to live again, and to attain his spirit. It was the interior life which was in the divine Man, who had made the one perfect sacrifice for its sake. If that life could be reached through the Levitical law, then the sacrifice of Christ had been needless.

“How was it,” he asked, “that they were so easily influenced after knowing this sacrifice of the Master? Could they tell him that they had received any spiritual gifts through outward ceremonies? And did they consider that the life of the spirit required marks in the body? Had spiritual development and manifestations grown out of the message of the spirit, or the old ceremonies? Even Abraham had believed in the power of a divine message, and it had been sufficient to purify him. Those who followed him were his truest sons. Its future power over the Gentiles had indeed been foretold to Abraham, in the words which declared that ‘all

nations would be blessed.' The Levitical law cursed those who were unable to fulfil all its demands, and man had never reached through them that higher life which was the redeeming work of Christ, who had endured the curse for the sake of a world-wide truth."

"He would give them a familiar illustration; even in the case of human agreements, no person could make them void by additions or alterations. The promise had been pledged to Abraham, and to his descendant, not a nation, but one person, which meant the Christ. This had preceded the Levitical law, and could not be affected or altered by it. If the gift came through the law, it certainly could not be that which was promised. Of what use was this law? It was permitted owing to the weaknesses and ignorances of the people, until the time came when the Man was born, and it had been given through holy spirits through the hand of a human instrument."

This last assertion contains more truth than might be commonly believed. The original "commandments" dated back to very remote ages, and formed part of that ancient wisdom which included far more than simple rules. The ceremonial law was gradually elaborated by the Jewish priesthood, and the evidence of its discovery at a comparatively recent date, proves from the pages of the Old Testament itself that the original work of the reformer, Moses, was incorporated with a system of which he had never dreamed. This has been so invariably the result of all marked reforms initiated by men, that the work of woman, in the evolution of a living race, incapable of retrogression, will form the only permanent expression of those truths which have been born to become, as it were, again engulfed in materialism.

"A divine message was of more importance than the work of this human instrument, or mediator. But the law was not opposed to it, although it had no living power. The sacred writings had concealed all this in their legal system, and empirical remedies for 'sin' in order that the old prophecy of the realisation of the

mission of the Master might be given in freedom. This was the stage of childhood, meant to pass away in a subsequent revelation. It was only an education, no longer necessary, for each might become a son of God, a perfect man, through the pathway given in the Christ. Those who had been baptised with his spirit knew this. There was neither Jew nor Greek ; there could be neither bond nor free ; there could be neither male nor female ; for humanity is united in the Christ."

These grand words contain the principle of the equality of all men, and of man and woman ; which is the very foundation of the work of Christ on earth. Only through inspiration could Paul have reached a height so noble in that far-off age, which, we dimly see through the mists of the centuries, was replete with the jarring elements of theologies, laws, customs, and national prejudices, such as must have filled the very air with conflict.

The heresies of Paul did not stop at that point. He went on to declare that "the followers of the Master were truly of the seed of Abraham, and therefore inheritors of the prophecy!" Picture the feelings of the orthodox Jew! "The heir in his childhood had no liberty, and it was the same with the rudimentary teaching given to the childhood of the world, but when the hour was ripe, the Perfect Man was born of woman, and within the very centre of the old law, that he might redeem those in subjection to it, and show them how to become sons of the Eternal One. And because they were His sons they had received the inspiration which enabled them to call Him, *Father*. No longer should they be slaves, but sons, and therefore heirs of the divine."

"In the past they had been enslaved by idolatry, and now that they realised the true God, and had been called by divine power, how could they turn to the miserable rudiments of the Jewish law! They observed days, and months, and seasons, and years, and he feared he had almost laboured in vain."

The Sabbaths, full moons, and other festivals of the

Jews bore no slight resemblance to those of pagan life, and had often been inveighed against as substituting ceremonies for true religion by the seers of Israel. Both were the degraded remnants of an esoteric system of such antiquity that history fails to trace it. The worship of Mithra, which was known in Rome, and the connection of the Jews with ancient Egypt, have aided in incorporating certain phenomena connected with planetary life within the Christian religion, which are not understood. The association of the "Sunday," with that "first day" on which Jesus reappeared, of the Jewish passover, the celebration of the "deliverance," and of Easter, with the returning life of the spring, have led some persons to believe that Christianity was the outgrowth of the "solar myth." This is a reversal of the truth. Jesus of Nazareth was the *fulfilment* of a universal hope, concealed in the mystic language and belief of almost every race of men, and it was in practical recognition of this that his unknown birthday was fixed at the winter solstice, when the "winter" being at its height, the sun enters upon the returning path to summer. By giving an embodiment of the "silent religion," and truth the illustration she demands, the holy spirits linked the Christ to the prophecies of seership and of nature, and made him the prophet of human destiny.

The worship of the "Sabbath" has not been a folly confined to the Jews. It has been a Christian failing to no less an extent, on the one hand leading to riotous feasting, resembling the heathen customs of Rome in its old days, and on the other, resulting in the funereal dispensation which rose to its height among the Puritans in Scotland, and in the early life of New England settlers. A rational day of rest for all persons, with as much recreation as is consistent with the common interests of repose, is more than ever a desideratum for the people. The higher life can be attached to no day, but so long as man requires the outer forms of worship, so long will they be a safeguard. Perfect liberty cannot

be attained by children without danger. Yet, if the churches proclaimed the great truths of life, the child would learn how to grow into vigorous manhood.

Paul reminded his bewildered flock of that visit which had arisen owing to some sickness, and of their warm reception of him, and asked them why they had become changed. "He surely could not be considered an enemy because he had spoken the truth. The Judaizing teachers desired to exclude them from all other instruction but theirs, which was only right in a good cause. He trusted they would be formed in the Spirit of Christ once more, and only wished he could speak to them himself, in his great anxiety with regard to them."

The allegory of the two sons must have been even more humiliating to Jewish pride, than anything he had previously said, since it represented the two institutions, the old law and the new message, as the two sons of Abraham, one of whom was the son of a slave, and the other the son of freedom; one of "the flesh," the other of "the prophecy." "The slave was the law of Sinai in the desert, and was a type of Jerusalem and her children, while the spiritual Jerusalem, which was of heaven, was free; and the universal mother." It might with equal truth be added that the divine and virgin mother is always the free woman, and brings forth with immeasurably greater power than the woman in bondage to merely physical marriage. "All of them," wrote Paul, including himself, "were the children of the prophecy, and the physical descendants persecuted those who were the spiritual ones. The slave and her son would nevertheless be the outcasts, for they could not inherit what was given to the free. Christ had given them liberty, and they must be strong, and refuse to be entangled again in any slavery. Such a rite as circumcision made the Christ-work of no value. It rendered a man accountable to a merely external law, and severed him from Christ, and from the power of his spirit, which pointed to a perfection in the future.

In the Christ such things were of no avail one way or the other; the true pathway was the belief in, or realisation of the truth, and a life inspired by love. Such perversions of the truth were of human origin, but dangerous enough to become a leaven, and he therefore trusted they would be as free as he was. If, as had been reported, he had taught the practice of circumcision, it was strange that he should be persecuted. It seemed to engage more attention even than the obstacle of a crucified Messiah. He really wished those who occasioned so much trouble could become like those mutilated heathen priests! They, his brothers, had accepted liberty, not to be misused or abused, but for the development of all. For the whole external law was fulfilled in simply loving one's neighbour as one's-self, and disputes such as they were occupied with tended to destruction. The life of the spirit forbade a life of sense; there was a struggle between them, but if the soul ruled, laws were needless. The evils he mentioned" (at this point followed an obvious list), "excluded from the divine kingdom, but the fruit of the soul-life was love, content, peace, patience, faithful devotion, self-control, which were above and beyond outward laws. And those who possessed the Master's spirit had overcome the impulses and passions of the physical being. The true spiritual life was always carried into practice, knowing nothing of pride or dispute. Even with regard to offenders, it was wise to help them towards restoration, since any of them might be tempted to do wrong. To bear each other's burdens was to fulfil the higher law of the Master. There was no room for personal pride, or for judgment of others, and each one was accountable for his own life. Those who possessed most inspiration should use it to teach others all that was good."

"There could be no exceptions to the results of their lives; those who lived for the body incurred the death of physical existence; (*i.e.* life in a physical world); those who lived for the soul would attain the immor-

talities of the eternal world. None should grow weary of the higher life, and it would sooner or later bring its reward, and each should work for the good of all human beings, and especially those who were associated with them in the faith."

"They would notice how long a letter he had written with his own hand! Those who wished to appear as making wise concessions only desired to escape persecution for the work of the Master. It did not aid them in the least to lead better lives, but they liked to be able to boast of their adherence to the old rules. As for him he should never glory in anything except that misunderstood cross of him who was the Christ, which had made him, in comparison, indifferent to the whole world. For rites and laws were nothing, but the birth of the new being within. And those who recognised this would enjoy that peace and redemption, which came to the nobler Israel. From that time he hoped no one would trouble him, for he bore in his being the sign of Jesus. Finally, he prayed that the perfection of the Master might be in the spirits of his brothers."

Are further comments needed? All that need be said is that the letter,—to the rigid and self-righteous Jews, blasphemous in "its day and generation"—contained principles which never were more urgently needed to be upheld than at the present hour, and which should be written in gold.

The Letter to the Converts at Rome.

It was during his last visit to Corinth,¹ that Paul sent that argumentative essay on the mission of Christ which has been called his thesis of theology. It is generally supposed to have been written in the year 58, A. D., and was addressed in part to those Jewish proselytes who had become converts, and in part to the Gentiles who had also accepted the truth. The reputation of Paul as the most prominent teacher of these new

¹ Probably the last.

religious views made such an essay on the faith, written for those whom he had never seen, very natural. He desired to visit Rome and to work there, and was anxious to make known his liberal ideas among those who lived in the imperial city. Nothing can be more clear than the fact that Christians existed in Rome before the visit of Paul, or any real or traditionary visit of Peter. And they had no doubt arisen in the first instance among the Jewish proselytes. It accounts for those Judaic elements which still live in a transformed condition in the church of Rome.

The essay was a very able one, considering the notorious difficulties with which Paul had to deal, and contains some of those beautiful inspirations concerning the great truth of the Christ which deliver all his writings from the thought or intention of any special date. Theology he had none. That was a later creation. His one endeavour was to show that while the new light meant freedom, it had been dimly foreshadowed in the things of old. He was broad enough to recognise harmony where others only beheld barriers and divisions.

The commencement of the essay is very lengthy, pointing out his own mission, the Messiahship of the Immortal One, at once the son of David and the son of God, and their own belief in that work. To translate it into modern and intelligible language is easy for all who have risen above the dead conventionalism of mistaken teaching, and obsolete modes of expression. Paul next expressed his pleasure at "the well-known belief of those to whom he wrote, and for whom he had often prayed, and earnestly longed to see. He owed them as much as others, whether they were civilised or not, wise or foolish. For him there could be no shame in the truth, since it was a divine power which taught the way of salvation to all who received it, and revealed a perfection which grew and increased in the measure of its realisation."

"Evil, by a divine law, plainly brought its own

punishment, and to reject a truth so manifest as the Eternal God, or Soul, of whom all nature spoke, and to which it had profound correspondences, only led to the folly and materialism which substituted a physical pantheism. The result of this externalism had manifested itself in many ways. The source of religious light having been obscured and falsified, the spiritual life became also deadened by the life of the senses, which led towards death, and was not worthy or capable of entering into the kingdom of God."

Those persons, Pharisees in their knowledge of the world, and the unknown arcana of their own nature, who think that the sense-loving life of the old pagans in their decline exhibited supreme conditions of evil and error, should realise that they are an outgrowth at all times, and in all ages, of the true life of materialism. Evils of the kind which Paul described were the children of their time, and they are the children of any time in which the merely physical controls the power of the soul. The condemnation which forbids social evils to be publicly countenanced, prevents, in modern times, the open disregard of all purity, which made Greece generally, Rome, and especially Antioch, centres of the worship of sense. But the prime transgression of man is the subjection of the soul, which is life, to the body, which is death; and, so long as marriage and religion are institutions in which matter holds sway instead of the divine spirit, so long will these violations of eternal law produce all the others. For those who become victims and sacrifices on the altar of matter there should be the deepest pity rather than self-righteous condemnation. The social redeemer must be woman; she must be free as a wife, and divine as a mother, so that the power of the spirit may be born into the organisations of the human race, and render the Christ less difficult to attain, nay, evolve the conditions for it within, for all. Woman must look upon the wrong-doer who has fallen from the high and sacred use of sex, as the Man of Nazareth did upon the

Magdalen. And she must appeal to man to lift up in marriage, the creative source, a better way.

Paul observed that "there was, however, no room for the Jews to pronounce judgment on heathen life, as similar evils had been known also among themselves, nor could they form exceptions to the action of eternal law, which rendered to each, according to his deeds, whether good or evil, whether leading to future life, or future suffering. In the light of this fact, there could be no exceptions, and no preferences, and it was the same for Jews and Gentiles. Those Gentiles, who," (like some of the Roman philosophers), "had led pure lives, had done more than possessed a law, which was the boast of the Jews, — they had followed it. The true judgment would be one day known in the Christ, when the interior life would become revealed. Had the Jews, who had boasted so much of the law of Moses, lived in accordance with it? So contrary was the fact, that their belief in the One God had been scorned, and the rite of circumcision, on which they had prided themselves, had become an absurdity. The only true circumcision was the purified heart, which made the Gentile, the real Jew."

"The Jew had certainly possessed certain advantages, in pure and divine instruction, and the want of faithfulness of so many, did not destroy this fact, for truth had been given to them which would always be realised. Nor did that want imply that its existence was an absolute necessity, and therefore divine injustice in the consequences, otherwise there could be no true guidance of the world. It was equivalent to saying that truth was the actual result of falsehood, and therefore that the consequences of evil were unjust. Nor had he ever asserted, as some had said in their slanders, — that evil might be done to accomplish good."¹

¹ Rom. III., 7, 8. These criticised verses are supposed *quotations* from a sceptical Jew who justifies his unbelief by its results, and *not* a declaration of Paul's own belief, for he emphatically condemns such reasoning. ("Their condemnation is just.") It is surprising that the passages, written by a man who was the antipodes of a Jesuit, and discarded every species of diplomacy, should ever have been misconstrued.

The casuistry which has been the shame of those theologians who have argued that for the benefit of man, wrong-doing might be permissible, has opened a field for treachery which in itself is one of the greatest of evils. Breaking faith with a "heretic," concealing truth "for the glory of God," secretly assailing innocent persons supposed to be dangerous to "a church" with unknown enemies whom they have never offended, and still more dangerous psychological influences conveyed through unconscious instruments, and sent forth in silence or in veiled guise upon sensitive persons, until they are overwhelmed with the tide, have been some of the honourable weapons of those persons who have forgotten religion in fanaticism. At this time of all others, when the visible and invisible worlds are interblending, should men and women, especially seers, still in their growth, be warned. Spirits can assume any guise. The one safeguard, the sole armour, is love of truth, no matter where it leads, and a heart of love within. This steels from the darts of the enemy, and permits the approach of those angels who work, not for sects, not for individuals, except so far as they may be necessary instruments for, or illustrations of, truth, but for the great future of the earth.

Paul wrote with wisdom in declaring that evil as a means could never bring forth good as an end. "The Jew and the Gentile," he went on, "were alike in their departure from the higher life," and no doubt to point it out more clearly to the former, he quoted some passages from the familiar Psalms. "These had been addressed to the Jews, and included them, in order that *all* should accept the true way of salvation. The external law had in fact proved the universal existence of evil. Above and beyond its methods, had been manifested the divine life which law and prophets had foreshadowed, in the realisation of Jesus, the Christ. All had sinned, but all could be redeemed by the Christ-spirit, which had been sent of God to be the sacrifice which made the at-one-ment which should destroy the

power of the evil of the past, and enable man to follow the Master in the present. It showed the love of God for humanity, and the justice of divine guidance. There could be no individual or national pride. For a realisation of Christ included the external law, and the conduct which it regulated, and made the Eternal One the ruler of both Jews and Gentiles. The spirit of the law was its sole stronghold."

"Even Abraham had attained a higher life through the spirit and its holy message than through legal observances, and it was the strength of his soul. Works," that is, deeds, "empirically employed, without the freedom of the Christ-spirit, were of no use."

This does not mean that conduct is of no consequence, but that it must be the result of *love*. Torquemada was one of the most devout and sanctimonious of men, and like other of the Inquisitors, of apparently irreproachable life. Carlo Borromeo ministered to those perishing of the plague with the utmost devotion, and persecuted heretics to the death. But the inspiration of love, the Christ-angel, was absent from these men, they were at work in the exterior, like the rigid Pharisees, and they certainly worked in behalf of evil spirits in their deplorable infatuation for the glory of the unity of an earthly church. The "contradiction of sinners" is bad enough; sometimes the contradiction of "saints" is worse.

"David had considered the man who was re-born into the new life as being blessed, and it included Abraham, who had entered it before his circumcision, and had himself dwelt in a strange land, and this made the patriarch the father of all 'believers' who followed in his footsteps."

If it can be shown that Paul meant to teach that the common orthodox idea of faith in Christ as constituting a mere atonement of blood for evil doings, the consequences of which would be thus miraculously escaped, the only result would be to recognise that he had taught the saddest of errors. His real efforts were simply in

the direction of declaring that the Levitical law could not enable men to be spiritually perfect ; and the lengthy, and perhaps, in this essay, somewhat tedious and reiterated arguments on that especial subject, are devoted to the work of clearing away obstacles in the direction of a knowledge of the new pathway. Another thing must be remembered. At that time the scepticism alike of Jews and Gentiles stood in the way of the reception of the light given in Jesus of Nazareth. It was necessary to believe in him in order to see the light. Although Paul was writing to converts, he was aware that what he said might be publicly read in the presence of inquirers, and the emphasis laid upon "faith" was necessary to the growth of the truth. Even this was a very different faith from the *credo* of the popular churches. In the light of the sublime mission of the Nazarene, the "apostles creed," and the catechism taught to children are of about as much value as "the house that Jack built." They contain in the first place, material errors, and in the next, have become "vain repetitions."

Moreover, since Abraham had existed fifteen hundred years before Jesus was born, his "faith" was that living receptivity of truth, the faith of *righteousness*, which had, and could have, no connection whatever, with the perverted idea of a "sacrifice of blood." As Paul said, "it was above legal observances, and pure from 'transgression.'" It was that apprehension of divine power in the soul which "quickens the dead." "It had made him believe in the prophecy of his fatherhood, and gave his descendants an example of belief in the Master, who had been sacrificed, to deliver them from evil and weakness, and had triumphed over death, to show them the strength of spiritual manhood. Since this was the case they might live in harmony in the Eternal One, and rejoice in that great hope, even bearing troubles cheerfully because they only increased the strength and growth of the spirit, which was filled with holy love. Jesus had died for the weak. Some might die for the good, but

a sacred design gave the Christ to man in his weakness. His martyrdom (blood) gave them the knowledge of deliverance from suffering, which was the consequence of evil. If this had shown the harmony between man and God, in their darkness, far more so would it become in their acceptance of it, which gave them his life."

"Through the physical man had come the weakness of sin, and the law of death, long before the law of Moses, and among those who had not been marked evil-doers. 'Adam' was a prophecy of the one to come. If through the weakness of the 'first Adam,' all were subject to death, far more through the strength of the second, the Christ, would all attain to the gift of life. The one had brought its own judgment; the other appeared, to save from sins and create righteousness; in the one death reigned; in the other the perfect life and immortality. One had been discordant; the other harmonious, and the law only served to make the nature of evil clear. Sin and weakness reigned in death, and so, also, strength and perfection gave eternal life in Jesus, the Christ."

Science has long ago dispelled the idea of a literal Adam and Eve, but it is easy to see that Paul believed in them as individuals, although he approached the true interpretation of the ancient legend in pointing out that "Adam" was typical of a condition. The source of that ancient vision of Adam and Eve in Eden is Egyptian, and contains some deep wisdom long veiled from ordinary minds in the form of a legend. It portrays the fall of the soul from Paradise, or the spiritual sphere in which it awaited incarnation into matter; of its subjection to the external, and to mere intellect; of the result in the divorced man and woman, who can only be really united in the spirit; of the toil and sufferings of man; of the pain and anguish of woman in maternity and her subjection to man; of the law of death, and of the long attraction to planetary life, which would make the whole of the human race born only to die again; finally, of the power of woman to destroy

the serpent of merely physical life, and of the material, in divine motherhood, and of the restoration of the soul to her kingdom, which is "Paradise regained." In each individual, also, there is an Adam and a Christ; a body and a soul; a Paradise and a Fall; an intellect, and an illumination; to enter the eternal life, is so to think and to act as to increase the life of the soul.

The historical period of the race of man is so recent, and so brief, that nothing is so far known of the life of races which are now reasonably calculated to have existed two hundred thousand years ago. Therefore, to suppose for a moment that the legends in Genesis are actual history, is to entirely pervert their true meaning. It is almost incredible that large numbers of the Christian clergy still speak of Adam and Eve as the literal "first parents," especially, when, from the very pages of the record, it may be learned that this was not the case! The words of Cain (Genesis, iv., 14, 15), speak for themselves.

"Freedom from external rites forbade anything in the shape of license, for there were always the two pathways, one towards life, and the other towards death, and they had accepted that which led to the former. In the old life, the body had been an instrument of sense; in the new, it was consecrated to the highest ends. The first was the condition of license, and the result, death. The second was freedom from sense, and the result was eternal life. For the price paid for the former was death, and the gift of divine freedom was the eternal life in Jesus, the Christ."

Then followed an illustration based upon the legal marriage of man and woman, which need not be dwelt upon, since Paul never taught that "gospel of woman," which must as surely follow the "gospel of man," as the Christ-reign must follow the Christ. What marriage is, what adultery is, what children may become, must be taught by woman. It is possible she may have as much to say in disparagement of man-made laws, legal bonds, and "sacramental rites" of the

church, as Paul had with regard to Judaism and the ceremonial law. Her ideal, like his, will proclaim the truth of the spirit, and she will teach no less than he did, that the law of purity can alone be obeyed in the spirit, and not in the old and unnecessary letter.

"The old law, itself, must not be connected with evil, however, although it showed a very undeveloped condition. It created a consciousness of evil which was an education, and with it brought that burden which made merely external commandments only lead to death. Before this had taken place, there was the ignorant animal contentment which knows neither good nor evil. The moral commandments were good in themselves, but could only be obeyed spiritually. Hence they were never fulfilled, since the physical man was ever bringing the soul into captivity, and none could deliver it except the Master, who had shown the pathway in the spirit of life, which gives freedom from the law of sin and death. The divine man had sacrificed himself to destroy the power of evil, in order that the law should be spiritually carried out. The mind of the flesh (outer), or intellect, is dead and material; the mind of the spirit, is life and peace; for intellect arrays itself against the divine order, to which it is not subject, and cannot alone lead to the higher life. If any man had not the spirit of Christ (the principle of love), he could not belong to that order. It controlled the physical being, and was the life of the soul. That link of man to God should at last redeem even the physical body. Those who were influenced by the holy spirit, were sons of God, free, and could call him "Father," inheritors of the divine, and co-inheritors with Christ, and if they suffered with him, they would also attain that glory."

Nothing could be more clear in these passages than that the "faith" in the Master was the faith which *acted out* his principles of love. It depended upon them, not upon him, as to whether they should enter the eternal kingdom. The pathway had always existed,

but it required a man who combined Love and Wisdom in his being to point it out to the people. That man, and no other, was the true deliverer, the Messiah.

Paul entered next upon a grand subject, the regeneration, or spiritualisation of the world. "The sufferings of the hour were slight compared to the glorious nature of the future of man. For all creation prophesied and awaited the unfoldment of spiritual manhood. It had been subjected to physical laws by the Creator, who had also designed that it should be redeemed from their bondage, into the glorious liberty of the Christ-race. All creation suffered as it were, in the effort to bring forth, and even they, who were the heralds of the spiritual condition, suffered also in the waiting for that last event, the regeneration of the body. Their highest hope was for something not yet realised which must be awaited patiently. The holy spirits, the *soul*, aided their weakness with prayers and sympathy beyond the expression of words, ever pleading in the hearts of those who knew the truth to go on with courage. All things, indeed, worked together for good to those who were called for a great purpose, and who were long ago appointed to become brothers to the Son of Man, and their having been thus chosen showed that strength would be given them. If God was for them, who could rise against them? And if so great a sacrifice had been permitted of the true son of God, it foretold that everything would be given to them. Who could accuse the chosen ones? God alone could condemn, or the Master, who had arisen to that sphere in which he could work in their behalf. No sorrows, or persecutions, or outer wretchedness, could separate them from the love of Christ, and in those very things they were more than conquerors through his power. Nothing in heaven or earth, could separate them from that holy love of the Eternal One which was manifested in Jesus, the Master."

Dwelling upon the grandeur of that mission of his, which had brought sacrifice so dire, Paul went on to

say he "often felt heavy-hearted. For he wished that he could endure the curse of separation himself, if 'Israel' would only accept the Christ, for they had possessed the glory of all that pointed towards him, the promises, and the prophecies, and had held the religion of the one God, and their great descendant had been Christ, eternally blessed of God. Still, the Messiah had not failed. The true Israel, the true child, was the spiritual one. So it had been decreed. Had this been a wrong? No. Some were born to remain blind, some to see. Even the obstinacy of Pharaoh only served to show an over-ruling power."

"If so, some would say they were guiltless of the rejection, but that was an accusation which did not become them. The readiness of the Gentiles to accept the truth was a greater illustration of power, and Hosea had prophesied that an alien people should be called; Isaiah, only a few of the children of Israel. The reason of this had been,"—and in this Paul showed that the cause was to be sought in the condition of the Jews themselves,—"that Israel had depended exclusively upon external methods, and signs. The crucified Messiah had therefore been a 'rock of offence,' and a disgrace, which, however, would be precisely the contrary to those who understood his mission. It was his heart's desire that they should accept the way of salvation, since they had a natural zeal in the religious life, although it was of an ignorant kind. They had evolved their own methods, and rejected the spiritual light. For Christ had been the fulfilment of the external, and had inaugurated a higher era to all who recognised him. Moses had said that immortality came through perfect obedience to the law, but the true spiritual life had neither doubts nor questions, but realised the truth within, and therefore courageously confessed Jesus as the Master, and the Life, and the way of salvation. There could be no disgrace in such a belief. Nor was there any distinction between Jew and Gentile, for the Christ was accessible to all. How could they accept

him if they had not believed, nor been taught, nor appointed to teach, the 'glad tidings'? It was their own fault, and Isaiah had prophesied their blindness in the pathetic words —

“ ‘ Who hath believed our report?
And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? ’

“ Belief resulted from teaching the truth. Had they not heard? Yes. Had not Israel known? Yes. Moses himself had called them void of understanding, and Isaiah had boldly said,

‘ I was found of them that sought me not, ’

observing of Israel that he had held out his hands all the day long to an incredulous people. Had God rejected the chosen nation? No. He, Paul, was also an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. They had not been rejected. He remembered the prayer of Elijah for Israel, who had killed the prophets, and overthrown the altars, and sought his life after he had been left alone, and the answer which had come in the seven thousand men who had not ‘ worshipped Baal. ’ There was a remnant still ! — chosen of love ! But it was not through the law. Love had influenced them, and the rest remained in unbelief, and in the blindness of materialism.”

The psalm of David quoted by Paul was hardly worthy of his pen, but it must be remembered that he presented it as a natural result of the rejection of the Messiah, which was truly caused by the narrowness and externalism of their expectations. “ Owing to this, the truth had lived among the Gentiles, and would open the eyes of Israel by a foreign stimulus. It had been best for the world, and would one day be their own glory.”

Those converts who were Gentiles he addressed as their especial teachers, “ in whom he gloried, and trusted the fact would awake some of his own nation, which would be a ‘ life from the dead. ’ The fathers of

the race had made it sacred, and the graft of the wild olive in the tree should not triumph over the branches which had been broken off. If Israel had not been spared, neither would the Gentiles who fell from their inheritance. God could graft in those cast off-branches, and surely they should be restored. Perhaps the unbelief had been permitted for the sake of a wider work, and until a riper age had come, in which 'all Israel would be saved.' It was the voice of prophecy. The deliverer would come. The condition had been allowed for the sake of the truth, and the Jews were beloved in the holy men of old. Whatever God gave was never recalled, and since the Gentiles had been wanderers themselves, but had found the light, so would the Jews. For the wanderings of the human race only resulted in its turning to the highest pathway. The Eternal One possessed wisdom and might in unfathomed depths. His designs were beyond the tracing of man, beyond his knowledge, and beyond his counsels, or beyond any gift from him. From Him, and in Him, and proceeding to Him, were all things, and His was an eternal glory."

At this point, the arguments of the essay close. The remainder of it is devoted to a description of the higher life, and some practical advice relating to the surrounding circumstances of the converts. "The physical body should be the consecrated instrument of the spirit, a living 'sacrifice,' not like the dead offerings of the past, and love should be the inspiration of all their thoughts and actions. It would bless even their persecutors, and the Christ-life should rise above even the thought of revenge." Paul also taught a submission to civil authority which has been severely criticised, since an emperor like Nero was a terror to the good rather than to the evil. It must be borne in mind, however, that the severities from which the early Christians suffered had not yet taken place, perhaps, had not been thought of, and also that Paul owed his life to the idea of justice in the Roman law. He may have entertained

a hope that the Christian faith would become a licensed religion of the state, if moderation and loyalty were recognised as a part of the Christian life. Be this as it may, it was obviously impossible for him to have counselled resistance, especially among converts part of whom had been educated in the old theocratic prejudices, to the imperial government, darkened as it was with corrupted pagan beliefs and practices. Had he foreseen the cruelties of six years from that date, he would, however, hardly have described any one of the Roman authorities as "ministers of God," and divinely ordained. At the best, earthly rulers are proofs of the weakness of human institutions; at the worst they have been, and in some cases, still are, a part of the evils which attend primitive conditions. "Love," he said was "the real fulfilment of the law."

"The spiritual life should conquer the merely physical impulses of the body. Some of them were weak, and some strong; some feared to eat 'unclean' food, observed 'sacred' days; and others were free. They must refrain from judging each other, and indeed, the strong should be able to bear with the infirmities of their weaker brothers. In life or death, their true relation was to the Christ, and the kingdom of God was not a question of eating or drinking, but of the higher life of the spirit. Therefore, the real error consisted in violating the conscience, or the best belief of that life, which another attained. The Master had never lived for small or merely individual ends, and had, indeed, incurred the reproaches which were due to others. His freedom was the freedom of love which meant brotherhood and harmony. He had been born of Israel for the sake of both Jews and Gentiles, which had been declared by the voice of the prophets. They should, therefore, be as brothers. He was aware that they were capable of realising all these things, but had ventured to write plainly to them, because he was the especial voice of the Master to the Gentiles. It would be a presumption for him to speak as he did, had not

the signs of his power among the Gentiles shown the guidance of the Master, and he had taught and travelled from Jerusalem, even to the far-off Illyricum, endeavouring to speak in places where the truth was unknown. Many things had thus prevented his visit to them, but now that this work was completed, and he had long desired to visit Rome on his way to Spain, he hoped to see them, after his journey to Jerusalem with contributions for the poor brothers there. When he did come, he felt he should do so with a blessing from the Master, and earnestly asked their prayers for his deliverance from persecutions in Judæa, and for his favourable reception at Jerusalem, so that he might visit his friends at Rome with happiness."

There the essay evidently closes, and the last words show the touching contrast between human hopes and anticipations, and the dread reality. Paul indeed visited Rome as he desired, but as a prisoner, who was only too glad to escape from the dreary confinement of the chamber at Cæsarea. He did see those unknown friends, but chained to a soldier of the Prætorian guard. He did appeal even to the heads of the Jews, and we know their reply. But he had given himself to God, and there were some who walked miles to meet him on his way to the city, and who sustained his courage. The work went on in the face of all obstacles, and the essay he wrote for the sake of the truth, and probably never dreaming that it would serve any purpose beyond that of the best interests of the time, was preserved, and prized, and copied, until it became the universal property of the Christian world.

It is needless to make any further comment upon it with the exception of this; that its entire spirit was utterly and completely alien to that semi-pagan and semi-Judaic idea, that the Deity required the blood of a victim for the pardon of human "sins," and it may be said with truth that this degrading and unspiritual conception of the mission of the Nazarene, has done more to alienate the thinkers of our age from a knowledge of

the Christ-life and the sublime victory of the soul, than all the horrors of the middle ages, in which it was death to follow in his foot-steps. This message of death so long preached by the man-priest, must once more yield to the gospel of life inspired in free woman. And of the church which will not admit her to its altar and its pulpit, it may be said, as it was of old concerning the temple of Jerusalem, great in its outer beauty, and desolate in its inner worth,—that the hour will come when “not one stone shall be left upon another.” Soulless and loveless religions can live no more.

The Letter to the Society at Philippi.

All the remaining letters of Paul were penned or dictated during his captive condition. He had arrived in Rome at last, and among daily work in behalf of his cause, which brought him in contact with many persons and many minds, he found time to write to his old friends at Philippi. The internal evidence seems to place it first in order in the list, and as the result of a visit from Epaphroditus, the “elder” or leader of the society in that place. The date, as well as that of the others, must have ranged between 61 and 63 A.D. The first sentence, with its mention of “bishops” and deacons, might suffice among casual readers to conjure up the vision of venerable divines in gowns and lawn sleeves, but the presbyters of the early societies were simply what the presidents of ordinary institutions are in our own century. Sometimes they were called presbyters, sometimes elders or overseers, and their position cannot, for a moment, be connected with the subsequent authoritative ecclesiastical dignitary who was called a “bishop.”

The letter in question is unusually simple in its character, and it was sent as a joint message from both the dictator, Paul, and Timothy, the scribe. Paul alluded to his “bonds,” and “how in consequence of them, the real cause of his suffering had become known to the

whole of the Prætorian guard, and had given fresh courage to his brothers in the cause. There had been some treachery among the teachers, who had taken advantage of his condition to preach a Christ of their own, but still, whatever their motives were, it only tended to proclaim his mission in the end. Their prayers and the sustaining power of the Master, kept him from feeling that his cause could be injured, and his only desire, whether he lived or died, — and indeed to die would only be a release — was, that he should hold up the great standard of liberty. If his life was essential to the truth, he knew he should still remain in the form, and thus cheer those he addressed when he was next among them. All he hoped was that they would stand firm in harmonious coöperation for ‘the faith,’ fearing no enemies, whose blindness only hid the light from them, while they were called upon to suffer and endure as he had done, for its sake. If there was power in the higher life of Christ, they ought to live in the harmony of love, — a love which knew no pride, remembering how the Master had given up the godlike condition of a spirit,¹ and had been embodied among men, even undergoing the humiliation of crucifixion. And for this very reason his name was glorious on the earth, would be regarded with love and reverence by all, and his mission was recognised among the holy spirits and mortals, and even the ‘spirits in prison’ or in the earth-sphere.”

“It was for them to press on and work out their own salvation and to live in the spirit of love, and as lights who held up the word of life in the world, and then he should feel he had not laboured in vain, and that even if he became a martyr for ‘the faith,’ both he and they would only rejoice. He should like Timothy to visit them, that he might hear details of their condition, for there was no man who would take such an interest in them as he would. Others were occupied with their own interests, careless of the work, but he had become

¹ “In the form of God.” “God is a *Spirit*.”

like a son, and had given every proof of his firmness. When he knew 'how it would go with him,' he hoped to follow, and Epaphroditus would return to them, as he had been in great anxiety as to the effect of the news of his own dangerous illness. Happily he had recovered, so that Paul had been spared a fresh sorrow, and they would welcome him with all the more joy, as he (Epaphroditus) had nearly sacrificed his life to aid him."

"They could rejoice in the truth of the Master, and it was not irksome to him to repeat the old cautions. They might be called 'dogs,' but they must beware of the real dogs, of the opposing workers, of the old rites; for the true circumcision was of the spirit, and he could declare it with all the more force owing to his having received the rite himself when an infant, and in consequence of his Jewish descent, with regard to which he was indeed, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had been so rigid a Pharisee, that he had persecuted the converts, and followed every external observance. These things now seemed to him worthless, everything was, except the knowledge of that truth which was in the Master, and which he hoped he should so attain as to triumph as he had done, over all sufferings, and win the immortality which would be free from re-embodiments and death. He was not perfect, but he pressed on, in order to seize on that life for the sake of which Jesus had, as it were, captured him. Forgetting old things, he eagerly went on towards the goal, at which he beheld the prize of the higher life of the Christ. All should do the same, and if they fell into any errors, a divine influence would reveal the truth, and lead them once more towards it. They should follow him, and avoid those who were leading in a wrong direction, since many, he was compelled to say with tears in his eyes, were opposed to the cross of the Christ-life, remained in the darkness of ignorance and earthliness, and worshipped external things. They had all become

citizens of a spiritual empire, in which the deliverer, Jesus, whom they awaited, would transform them, giving them freedom from the physical body of weakness, through the same power which had made him victorious. Those who were as a crown to him, should stand fast in the Master!"

"He earnestly counselled Euodia and Syntyche," (two ladies who belonged to the society,) "to live in harmony. He hoped Syzygus," ("yoke-fellow,") "would reconcile them, for both had worked with him in the cause, and also with Clement, and others whose names were in the 'book of life.' They could rejoice in the Master and he would ever bid them be happy. All should be gentle, and cast away every anxiety, relying on their prayers to the Eternal One. Then that divine peace which was beyond the knowledge of any mere intellect, would guard their thoughts and affections through the spirit of Christ. His final appeal to them was to adhere to all that was true, all that was honourable, all that was just, lovely, pure, and virtuous, and if virtue and honour were realities, to value those things. Whatever he had taught they might receive and follow, and the divine peace would be within them. He was glad that they had at last remembered him, or rather shown that this was the case. He did not refer to his own necessities, as he had learned to be content, under all circumstances, to bear deprivations as well as the possession of all things; for he had learned the secret of the interior wealth which supplied all want, and could do all things through the strength of the Christ-spirit. Still, he appreciated their kindness, and they would remember how in the 'beginning of his work, after he had left Macedonia, theirs was the only society which gave him any help, and they had sent him gifts more than once when he was at Thessalonica. He had never sought such aid, since his sole desire had been for the spiritual results of his efforts in their lives. He possessed now more than enough, and the gifts of

Epaphroditus which they had sent him, were as an incense to the powers above, who would supply all their needs in the riches of the Christ."

In his closing salutations, occurs this significant passage, "All the brothers salute you, especially they that are of Cæsar's household." The truth had already spread from the dingy dwellings of the despised Trastevere to the Prætorian barracks, and the imperial palace itself.

The Letter to the Converts at Colossæ.

The visit of Epaphras to Rome was no doubt the immediate cause of the letter of Paul to his friends at Colossæ, where a society had been formed, as well as in other places, which had not been personally visited by him. Some Judaic elements had crept into its life, which naturally roused the teacher of liberty to action, as soon as he learned of them, and induced him to send some counsel to the converts himself. Although not so important or lengthy as his other writings, it may be well to give an outline of the contents.

Speaking for himself and Timothy, Paul expressed "his pleasure at the belief of his brothers in the Christ and a future life, and of the rapid growth of the truth in every direction, and also of the spirit of love which Epaphras had informed him existed among them. He prayed that they might live a patient life of purity and true wisdom, rejoicing that they had been led from darkness into the light of the kingdom of divine love. Christ, who was the redeemer from evil, was the divine image of manhood, the first-born of creation in its power, and in him existed not only the forces of the planet, but the forces of the spiritual world, and of a high order; he had aided, in his preëxistence, in forming the planet, and it would develop into his plane of life, for the Christ was the concentrated force of all things. He was the head of the body which followed him, and was the first-born of the spiritual, and the Easter of the physical, race; rep-

resenting, therefore, a preëminent Messiahship. It was divinely designed that he should be life in its perfection, thus furnishing a standard to which all would attain, for the sake of which he had undergone the sacrifice of the cross, and this standard was the light of visible and invisible beings. For them, and they had at one time lived in darkness, he had given his body as the bread of life, in order that they should realise the pathway, and go onward in it so long as they remained firm in the truth which was everywhere taught, and of which he had been a teacher. He felt glad in the midst of his sufferings, so much so that his joy was a compensation for the sorrows he endured for the sake of the followers of the Master, by whom he had been appointed a teacher, who should declare fully the mystery of life which had existed concealed through the ages, but was now made known to his Gentile brothers, who were enlightened by the glory and hope of that mystery of the Christ, which he had proclaimed. He had striven to make all grow perfect in it, and had been impelled to do so by the Master himself."

This passage possesses a significance which will be readily understood from all that has been previously explained. What was the "concealed mystery" of the ages, and the unknown wisdom? Was it not the power of the Soul? Who had dared to reveal the knowledge acquired among the unknown saints and sages of the earth, who were linked together in a sacred brotherhood, and had penetrated the interior recesses of nature? Alas! such knowledge could not have been attained by the people; it was esoteric, sealed, veiled, and its sole records lived in the language of symbol, visible in all nations, in all earthly temples, and among all the great races of men. To teach men the way of Life, and the power and beauty of immortality, the knowledge had to be embodied, and translated into words and deeds of love and strength. This was the Christ, the star-like soul, the supreme initiator of humanity into the mysterious kingdom. It was a sublime

sacrifice; a grand design; a majestic deliverance, — the child of the Purity, Wisdom, and Love, of the powers above.

Whether he knew this truth or not, Paul must have been inspired in writing those words. They were not the empty verbiage whose sound has echoed so long in vain within so-called Christian churches, but the declaration of an extraordinary and most sacred truth. He repeated it more than once, and in more than one letter, and his sole initiation was the *presence of the Nazarene*. In the next sentence, while observing how earnest were his aspirations for all those who had not seen him, he stated again that he hoped they would understand “the divine mystery, the Christ, in whom were embodied the hidden treasures of wisdom and science. He trusted that no human efforts, however plausible, would lead them away from it, and although absent in body, he had seen them in the spirit, and knew the firmness in their ranks.”

This may have been a fact, or a merely symbolical statement of his sympathy. But that it was possible for Paul to have recognised the society through his seership, none should deny. He did not dwell upon the spiritual manifestations which had come within his experience, because, like a true seer, he considered philosophy the soul of phenomena, the science and the wisdom to which they must lead.

“He would caution them against sophistry, and material errors; the Christ included the divine life, and the spirit of all the old rites; their baptism, that of the spirit, buried the ‘old man’ and gave them the living power which destroyed evil, and rendered outward observances needless. The victory of the Christ had been attained through his freedom. No one had a right to lay down any rules for others with regard to clean or unclean food, festivals, new moons, or the sabbath; these things had been shadows, and at best only prophecies; the reality was Christ. Nor should any claim authority by professing reverence for their own visions,

or kabalistic mysteries, and things they did not understand, or which made them vain, and therefore liable to forget the central and vital truth. There was no necessity for them to renew the old ordinances, which had died in the Christ, and they should avoid everything which drew them into a belief in merely human regulations. They appeared to subdue the body, but were of no real value in conquering its impulses."

Mere asceticism and austerities, practised for the purpose of "obedience to rules," and "methods of salvation," are as useless for developing the spiritual life, as the old Juggernaut of the Hindoos, the pillars of St. Simeon and others in Egypt, and the solitary cells of the walled-in church-hermits, the "ankers" of the middle ages. Such a system bears no resemblance to the grand freedom and purity of the Nazarene. It is the empirical remedy for dealing with disease, not the making it impossible. The ideals of manhood and womanhood can never be found in the monk and the nun.

In the midst of a sentence which did not place the pathway in its clearest and best light, Paul truly said that "they had died to the old ceremonial rites, and their life was the divine one of the Christ. Excess and the subjection of the soul to the physical body, and to any evil impulses, were to be shunned; they brought suffering. The 'new man' was increased in strength, and grew in the image of the Eternal One, in whom the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, of rites or of race, of freedom or slavery, had ceased to exist."

"They should act in the same spirit of love which had inspired the Master, for love developed man towards perfection. His teaching would direct them in the truest wisdom, and guide all their actions in the same spirit as his."

After this Paul gave some practical advice and directions, which so far as womanhood was concerned, showed the purely masculine and material view of her relation to man. It was not for him to free woman.

She must do this herself, since every step in the pathway of progress and of spiritual development is the effort of the soul to make its own Easter. The power is within. Man cannot give woman her liberty; she must create it by her own interior strength, and the clear manifestation of her true position. When Paul wrote "wives be in subjection to your husbands in a fitting manner, in the Christ-life," he thought he had presented the highest ideal of the relations of man and woman. Why should woman obey man? Has any other reason been furnished than that which has dominated the primitive races of mankind, — the physical force, which makes it the right of the physically stronger and larger being to rule over the physically weaker and smaller? Through a merely material and external science, indeed, womanhood can never be understood, for the force of her nature exists in body as in soul, in the interior. To the materialist, woman will always appear as an arrest of development; as the possessor of a less powerful brain and organisation, and as one who is at all times liable or destined to take a secondary position in human institutions and forms of government, if it appeared necessary for what seemed the general benefit. He will recommend liberty in the exercise of what he calls "natural functions" as a matter of health of mind and body for all human beings, and he will consider that woman should be emancipated from conventional modes of thought and action, and from exclusion in her share of government in the state, because man is capable of controlling the world without committing any injustice on her. But the mere removal of legal disabilities, and of all discredit in more free social methods of living, can never make known the Christ which exists in womanhood. As her physical organisation is receptive to that living force in man which creates a child, so also is her interior order of intellect the crucible which changes his material knowledge into spiritual science; his wisdom into universal love, and his physical nature into the spiritual. If man is a king, it is woman who

alone can crown him ; and if woman is a queen, it is in that eternal kingdom to which she leads him, and which shall endure forever. In the relations and sacred uses of the sexes, Paul never was and never could be an authority. Their true apprehension must be based on experience and facts, and the higher law had not yet been manifested in the "twain," so long divorced, who "had become one flesh."

His views with regard to children, fathers, and servants (possibly slaves), were given in all sincerity, and so far as they went were in the direction of justice. Certainly, they furnished a better ideal of human relations than that which regarded persons, whether children or slaves, in the light of property. He closed the letter with the expression of a hope that there would be new openings for that teaching for the sake of which he was a prisoner, informed them that Tychicus, the bearer of the document, would tell them all the details of his life in Rome, and that Onesimus, who had become a faithful brother, would accompany him. Aristarchus, who shared his imprisonment, sent them greeting, and also Mark, (with regard to whose possible visit they had received directions), as well as Justus, the only members of his fellow-workers, who had been a comfort and support to him. Their friend Epaphras gave them his prayers, and he could testify how earnestly he had worked in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, his loved physician and Demas, sent their good wishes, and he begged to be remembered to all the brothers in Laodicea, and also to Nymphas, and the society which met in his own house. He should like the letter to be read to them all at Colossæ, and at Laodicea as well, and also that they should hear the letter addressed to the society at the latter place, and he hoped Archippus would become a faithful teacher. Then follows the signature — "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand," and a request that they should remember with sympathy his condition of imprisonment.

The Letter to Philemon of Colossæ.

The cities of Hierapolis, Colossæ, and Laodicea, were all near together, the two latter places being only some six miles apart. Ephesus was in the same district, and Tychicus took letters from Paul for the society there as well as the one at Colossæ. Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, who was one of the leaders at Colossæ, took the letter for him. How it was Onesimus had found his way to Rome, has been a matter of conjecture, but he had probably been guilty of stealing, and therefore had gone on board some vessel sailing from Ephesus which was bound for the imperial city.

Paul has been severely criticised for not boldly declaring the evil and wrong of regarding human beings as property, but considering the difficulties he had to encounter in liberating the work of Jesus of Nazareth from all connection with the ceremonial law of the Jews, what would have been the result if he had taught that slavery was a crime to races among whom it was a universal custom? Clearly, that he would never have been able to teach those principles which contained the deathblow of such a system. Even among the Jews, slaves were regarded as an inferior order of beings; and in the Roman empire they were subject to merciless laws. The great teacher, himself under surveillance, and in actual peril at any hour of his life, could only say that all men were equal in the the spirit. It was enough. The return of Onesimus with such a letter was a victory. Such ideas, however alien to the age, were noble and grand, and would ensure the runaway thief forgiveness, and a welcome for the sake of the Great Deliverer.

The letter was sent from Paul, and also Timothy, the scribe, and in the first words, Paul described himself as a prisoner for the sake of the Master. It was addressed to Philemon, his wife or sister Apphia, Archippus his son, and the association of converts which met at their house. He said that "he rejoiced

over the love and faith of Philemon, whom he had remembered in his prayers, and trusted that he would be inspired to work for good among all his brothers in the cause. He knew he had strengthened his fellow-converts. Therefore, he felt he could boldly counsel what was right, or perhaps he should rather say, entreat, for the sake of his friendship, since he was now an old man and a prisoner; and he earnestly begged to speak in behalf of Onesimus, who had become a child of the truth, and who, although he had indeed been far from a 'help,' had now grown truly such to both of them." (Onesimus meant "help.") "He had sent him back, with the deepest compassion, and would have liked to keep him as a source of assistance given him by Philemon himself, while he was imprisoned, but he decided to do nothing without consulting him, in order that such a favour might not be taken, but voluntarily given on his part. For perhaps Onesimus had been parted from him for a time in order that he should receive him again, and keep him always, no longer as a slave, but far more, as a loved brother, one who had been dear to himself, and must certainly be still more dear to Philemon, both as a man and a Christian. If Philemon looked on him as a fellow-worker, he would beg him to receive Onesimus as he would himself. And if the latter had done any wrong, or was in debt to him, it was to be placed to his (Paul's) account; he wrote with his own hand, that he would pledge himself to repay it, to say nothing of the debt that Philemon owed him in *himself*. He would beg his brother to make him happy by Christ-like action, and thus cheer him. Feeling sure of his acquiescence he had written to him, and he knew he would do more than he had been asked. He would also ask him to prepare a lodging for him, as he hoped that their prayers would be answered, and that he should be able to visit them. Epaphras, who was sharing his imprisonment," (probably living in the same lodging, which was under the surveillance of the Roman guard), "sent his greeting,

as well as Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, his fellow-workers. He prayed that the love of the Master, Jesus, the Christ, might live in his spirit."

Paul did all that was possible under the limitations of his time, and as delicately as he could he suggested that Onesimus should become one of the workers in connection with himself. Had this request been granted, it is certain that Paul would never have regarded or held him as a slave. The letter was a beautiful one, and interpreted in its true meaning, it is impossible to understand how it could ever have been asserted that it showed any sympathy with that pride of outward advantages, or the assumed superiority of race, class, and caste, which has in all ages produced slavery.

The manumission of slaves was afterwards regarded as a religious ceremony, and became one of the early reforms initiated by Christians; but an immense period had to elapse before the serf finally disappeared from Europe. Immemorial customs live long after their foundation has been honey-combed by a general recognition of their irrational nature.

The Letter to the Society at Ephesus.

This letter, somewhat involved as it is in the mode of expression, dwells even more fully than any of the others on the fact that the *embodiment* of the divine truths known in past ages was a design for the benefit of humanity.

The wisdom of the soul, attained through self-conquest by the great sages of the East, was proclaimed to the people through the beauty of its expression in the Nazarene, through whose sacrifice the way of deliverance had been drawn forth from the realm of the esoteric and mysterious, into the daily bread of life for man. The divine science was concentrated in Christ, at once the Man of earth, and the Son of heaven.

Paul writes that "he prayed that the converts might

realise this priceless demonstration of power, which prophesied of man redeemed, and might recognise that the order of the Christ was far above earthly honours, or earthly monarchies, present or future, since it belonged to the kingly estate which conquered the physical and material."

"This new Life had quickened them, so that although they had existed only for physical enjoyments and excesses, and had been under the dominion of earth-bound spirits, they had now become the heirs of the heavenly kingdom through the Master in whom they had believed, and who had made the old external law needless. For man was the supreme work, and the image of the Christ in him, gave him the source of right action. The real uncircumcision of the Gentiles had been the darkness of their condition; the real separation from the true Israel, their ignorance of God. Through the sacrifice of Jesus all this had been changed. He had become the harmony between the Jew and the Gentile, and had 'broken down the middle wall of partition,' in order that 'there should be a unity of true religion among all, for the Master was the way to the sacred spiritual life of the Eternal One.'" This "partition" was an allusion to the stone wall which separated the court of the Gentiles from the inner sanctuary of the Jewish temple, into which it was death for the former to enter.

"They had heard how this 'mystery of Christ' had been revealed to him, and it had been unknown to men in the way it was now disclosed through those led of the spirit, — that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs with the Jews, of the truth. And he, who had been, as it were, the least of the workers, had been given the knowledge of the immeasurable value of the Master's work, and the power to teach others the true nature of the manifestation of that inner and divine Soul, which was the sacred key of nature, so that kings and princes of the earth might know the great design, and the mission of the societies formed in its behalf. They must not despair

at his condition, for in the end it would help them. And for the sake of this, he who was a prisoner, knelt in prayer to the Father of all nations, asking that they might become strong in the spirit, and realise the all-embracing heart of Christ, which would make them perfect. He besought them to live in peace and harmony as a body inspired by one spirit, recognising one guide, and one God, the Father who dwelt in all things. The one who had 'led captivity captive,' and had ascended, (which also implied descent, or incarnation) would give spiritual development to all; some would be seers, some teachers, some prophets; in order that their true manhood should grow to the likeness of the Master, and that they should be influenced to remain firm, and speak the truth in love. They must relinquish the materialism which had led to so much evil among the Gentiles, since it was opposed to the spirit of Christ, and the life of the soul. Falsehood, anger, theft, slander, evil conversation, malice and strife, idolatry and immorality, should be relinquished. The same love should inspire them which dwelt in the Eternal One, and which alone led to the everlasting kingdom. Evil produced suffering, whoever might teach the contrary. They must become 'children of the light,' and give up all association with the 'unfruitful works of darkness.' The light showed the true nature of that darkness, and those who slept in it should awake to new life and the light of the Christ would shine upon them. If they desired to show their cheerfulness and merriment, it should be with singing, and the music of hymns, not with the drinking of wine, or riotous conduct."

After this followed the old erroneous idea of the relation of woman to man which has had such disastrous consequences in marriage, and on the human race. It represents woman as the "body," or the exterior principle of humanity which is the reverse of the truth. Paul beheld the divine man; he knew nothing about divine motherhood. It was the last "mystery," the completion of the manifestation of the esoteric, to be re-

vealed by woman. It is not only necessary that the *Word* should be represented in one man, but that it should be embodied in a higher race, gifted as he was, belonging as he did, to the "sacred order," and of whose kingdom there should be no end.

His counsel to children, fathers, and servants and masters, was of a superior character, and, concluded with the noble words that all men were equal in their real and eternal relations.

Considering that he was awaiting his own trial, and dictated those letters from a place which was little short of a prison, their contents evince a courage, and a strength of the rarest kind. To strengthen, and teach, and advise others, in the midst of dread afflictions, has been given to few, but among those few, Paul preëminently stood. His last known words to the loved societies he had done so much to found, and for which he had so deeply suffered, was an appeal, full of vigour and earnestness, that all their members, should, as it were, be clothed in armour. "The conflict," he said, "was less with mortals than with that spiritual blindness and opposition which reigned over those in authority on the earth." No doubt he had heard of the real characters of Nero, Tigellinus, and others, and felt that they would become the instruments of the powers of darkness. Only the "armour of God" would enable them to stand against their fiery darts. As he wrote or dictated his final appeal, perhaps his eyes fell upon the Roman soldier, and the panoply of earthly warfare. "They should wear," he said, "the girdle of truth, the breastplate of pure actions, the shield of firm belief, the helmet of the way of deliverance, and the divine sword of the spirit, and remember to pray." "He hoped they would include him in their prayers that he might boldly speak, as was his duty, those truths for which he wore a chain. Tychicus, whom he sent to cheer them, would give every detail with regard to his condition."

The concluding part of the letter to the Roman converts, commencing with the sixteenth chapter, has been

considered as in reality a fragment of some letter written at Corinth, connected with the society at Ephesus. It contains a list of apparently old and well-known friends, commencing with Phœbe, a convert at Cenchreæ, whom Paul trusted his Ephesian friends would help, since she had aided himself, and many others. Messages were sent, or salutations, to Prisca and Aquila, who had travelled with him from Corinth to Cenchreæ, and to Ephesus, where they remained, and subsequently risked their lives for him. They deserved the thanks, he thought, of all the societies in Asia, one of which, (in their own house), they sustained themselves. Many men and women who had become converts, and who were no doubt known to one another, were mentioned by name, and they were all advised to avoid disputes, and the erroneous teaching, of evidently, the Judaising party. He desired they should be wise in all that was pure, and innocent of all that was evil. The Eternal Love would bruise the Satan of evil and discord after a short season.

Then came salutations from Timothy, Luke, Jason the Thessalonian, and Sosipater, his relative; a message from Tertius, the writer, from Gaius, with whom Paul was staying, and Erastus, the treasurer of the city of Corinth.

Finally, Paul commended them all to the eternal Father, who could make them strong in the liberty he had taught in the Christ, who in this fragment, as in other writings, he clearly declared to be "the *revelation* of the mystery which had been *held in silence for ages*, but was manifested at last." This work, he said, had been foreseen by the seers and prophets, and was a divine method, or design, of making the truth known to all nations. The wisdom which had been held in silence, by the great secret orders of Egypt at a time when she was filled with the light of truth, and long before the knowledge of the true God had declined into worship of the forces of nature, was nothing else, and nothing less, than the great and majestic and sacred power of the victorious Soul.

Letters to Friends.

The two letters of Paul to his faithful companion, Timothy, who had travelled so far with him, and cheered his imprisonment at Rome, and one to Titus, the Gentile convert, who had accompanied him on his famous visit to Jerusalem, are the sole records which remain of the last labours of Paul. They are full of the same indomitable faith, the same strength which held up the truth amid every form of opposition, the good counsel, which seemed to Paul his best explanation of the pathway to life, and in the second letter to Timothy, the last mortal sigh which mingled with his declaration of a victory beyond stripes, and prisons, and death itself.

For five long years had he been deprived of liberty, and when he was released, he seems, as was natural, to have gone over the old ground, and visited the places which had witnessed some of his earliest struggles. Timothy was at Ephesus, and the letter of advice to him was despatched from Paul on his way to Macedonia. In the opening sentence, God is spoken of as a saviour. It contained a deep truth. The development of the divine or god-like in man is his deliverance, or liberation, and therefore his salvation in the noblest sense of the word. Timothy had a work to do among the Ephesian converts, who were always increasing. The light of the truth had been mixed up with, and obscured by, the corrupt mythologies which had grown out of ancient mysticism, and had occasioned the growth of controversies, rather than a knowledge of the higher life. Some had endeavoured to become teachers of the Jewish law, and did not understand their own doctrines. "External law," wrote Paul, "was of value as a recognition of evil, but for the man pure in spirit, it was not required. He was glad he himself had been led from his condition of bigotry and scepticism into the service of Christ. It was most true that the Master had been incarnated to deliver evil-doers, among whom

he (Paul) had been chief, thereby furnishing an illustration of the power of that love of the Christ, which would draw others into the pathway of eternal life. He committed the charge of the work to his son Timothy, whose career had been foretold, knowing he would carry on the warfare with firmness, unlike persons such as Hymenæus and Alexander, whom he had excluded from association with them, in order that they might cease to corrupt the truth. Prayers should be made for all men, especially those in positions of trust and authority, that peace might reign among them. It was the divine will that all should know and accept the way of life, of which Jesus, the Christ, had been the medium of manifestation, at the appointed time, and of which he had been a faithful teacher among the Gentiles."

Then followed another passage on the relations and duties of man and woman, in which there is the same ignorance of the paramount truth, based on an argument which has long since been shown as untenable,—the creation of man before woman, as *apparently* taught in the symbolical legend of Genesis. If the "woman" had fallen from her first estate, there was all the more reason that she should regain it. If she could barely survive the extreme sufferings of the birth of children, there was all the more need that she should attain the freedom which would deliver her from what has indeed been a curse, literally and spiritually, for it has been as difficult for spiritual truth to be born, as a child. The "fall" represents the eclipse of soul in man and woman, a condition of the present as well as the past. The Eternal duality existing in the universe has already been dwelt upon. The Christ in Man, as an individual, represents the union of his external and internal powers of life, and the development of his own immortality: the Christ in Man and Woman in the true marriage, represents the spiritualised man and woman united in the interior, as well as in the physical organisation, and manifesting

the principles of harmony, purity, equality, and liberty for the service of regeneration, and the evolution of an immortal race. Therefore, the Messiah, or Messenger, was in the first stage, Man; showing the pathway of the individual; and the Messiah, or Messenger of the fulfilment must be Man and Woman, showing the pathway of the race in marriage. The very nature of the last message proclaims divine motherhood in perfect freedom, and the equality of woman as a teacher with man. It is the death-blow of the old curse of the subjection of woman to man in the merely physical marriage, in which ignorance, inharmony, passion, inferior magnetic influences, excess, and masculine compulsion, have wreaked their vengeance on generation after generation. At all costs, woman must be free; she must deliver man from the conventionalities of the old social order, the "whited sepulchre" which hides so many unfathomable wrongs; she must hold her being consecrated to a divine end; she must declare through the inspiration of pure love, who should be the father of her child, and when she should become a mother, holding herself virgin to all but him, and she should preserve herself on a plane which would make man regard union with her as a mission from God. The strength, intensity, and positive nature of man, harmonise with the gentleness, purity, and love of woman. His supremacy as the vitaliser is balanced by her productive power, nor indeed is it possible for man to be a divine father except in the realm of the spiritual, where her equality is assured. The attempts of man to rule over woman have been his vain efforts to wrest from her that crown which she could never give him unless she was free. Man can only be king as regards woman and the world, when he is ready to rise from materialism, to suffer woman to utter her claim, and to come forth from her old imprisonment in freedom. Until then she endures in silence, the glory of the truth is unknown, and the voices of her children appeal to the very portals of heaven, with the bitter

cry of the "souls under the altar," — "*How long, O Lord — how long?*"

Paul gave Timothy his ideal of an elder, or president of a Christian society, concerning which no comments are necessary. It was a high one, and the counsel wise in almost all respects.

"He wrote fully in case he should be unable to come to Timothy. The mystery of perfection was great, indeed, in the one who had been embodied,¹ pure in spirit, surrounded by angelic beings, sent to all nations, recognised on earth, and received again in a heavenly sphere. They had been spiritually forewarned of the perversions of this truth which would occur through the influence of earth-bound spirits, and the unfaithfulness of men who were untruthful, and without conscience, and who would forbid marriage, enjoin long fasts, and other exterior severities, and ascetic practices."

Paul seemed to have a dim vision of the anchorites and the "pillar saints," of whom it may be said that their devotion and its results resembled rather the growth of the fungus than the unfoldment of the flower, and which were subversive of, rather than favourable to, the expansive liberty of the Christ-spirit.

"It was well to caution the brothers with regard to these things, as well as the mythological histories which were familiar to the pagan worshippers, and which tended to lead them again into the external. Timothy should train himself to live a stainless life, which was wisdom in all things, and led to immortality. It was the divine hope, in which was redemption for all, and for which they laboured. He trusted Timothy would study as well as teach, and so conduct himself that he would aid others not with a show of authority, but

¹ 1 Tim. iii., 16. Revised version: "Great is the mystery of godliness; *he who was* manifested in the flesh." Old version, no doubt designedly mistranslated by certain scribes; "Great is the mystery of godliness, *God* manifested in the flesh;" an expression which was sure to be, and has been, popularly misunderstood, although man can, and will, become directly linked to the Central Soul.

with a heart of love. No widow ought to be supported by the society under sixty years of age, and unless she was of good character."

Some of the women converts had evidently returned to old ways of life, especially the young widows, so that Paul thought it was better for them to marry again.

The quaintness of his language and strength of the expressions, point to numerous "social scandals," as they are called, but which were and are as much a part and parcel of undeveloped humanity as its physical flesh and blood. It is very difficult for the majority of persons to live above the organisation and the tendencies which have been their inheritance. The imperfect marriage, with its passions of earth, has been the one reason beyond all others of the "narrowness" of the way and the "straitness" of the gate. Even the Nazarene, beautiful as was his soul, had a perfect birth, and an organisation free from disease.

"The faithful elders were to be sustained, and Timothy was to be careful about calling any one to such offices in haste."

The pioneers of the temperance cause have had more controversy with regard to "the wine" which Timothy was to take on account of his delicate health, than would be contained in several volumes. The individual actions of the young convert of Lystra are of no consequence one way or the other. The question must always be solved by the best methods of action in the present, otherwise man is held in chains to a past which he fills with his own death. With the rarest exceptions, such as the use of very small quantities of brandy in cases of extremity, man would be stronger and purer, and sounder in body and mind, if intoxicating liquors perished from the face of the earth at once, and forever. Unfortunately, so long as the condition which demands external stimulants exists, so long will something be sought to supply that lack of vitality which should be inborn. Hundreds of thousands of

persons resort to stimulants, in the first instance, owing to physical depletion or mental depression. It results in a habit which it is almost impossible to break, and the influence of which passes through several generations, like the shape of the features, and the faculties of the mind. Opium and morphine are some remedies of the modern school of physicians which are no less dangerous, and tend to unbalance the mental and moral nature. They deliver from the hell of the moment to lead into a Gehenna of years, and, without warning, without pity, and without help, millions of the victims of stimulants and drugs have passed on to their doom.

The general advice of Paul, that all persons should be content in the condition in which they lived, was wise in its spirit of superiority to merely earthly cares; yet the work of the Nazarene meant freedom for the slave, and the peaceful growth of civilisation and its beauties in their very highest aspect. There must always be harmony between the outer and the inner in the kingdom of God; but in the past, as in the present, the effort to attain it was a warfare. Paul charged Timothy to "fight for the faith, and to seize on (wrest) the immortal life which had been disclosed to him. The Master had held to the truth before Pontius Pilate, and so must he, and without spot, without reproach, until the Christ appeared again, according to the will of the Eternal One, the true King of immortal life and light, unapproachable, and invisible to mortals, and who was the source of universal power."

"Those who were rich should be liberal, and free from pride, and lay up the real riches, which would enable them to live in the immortal world; and Timothy must carefully guard himself against the criticisms and disputes of merely physical science or intellectual philosophy which had led some away from 'the faith.'" It was a wise caution, for the variable knowledge of physical laws, always subject to further discovery and change, often serves to eclipse the unchanging and eternal science of the spirit and the soul.

The Letter to Titus.

In the course of his last series of journeys, Paul, accompanied by Titus, had visited Crete, where he left him. Since there are no details of the events of this period, it can only be conjectured that within the large cities Christian societies had been sufficiently firmly founded to make a special visit to Crete of importance. It was not a very hopeful field, nor had its inhabitants borne the best reputation. Perhaps these were precisely the reasons why Paul desired that some effort should be made, and, feeling anxious that Titus should be successful, he sent him a letter of earnest advice.

In the course of his greeting he observed that he "was a teacher of that immortality which had been the eternal design, and had at a ripe hour made known. For the sake of this truth he had left Titus at Crete, in order that he should found societies in the island." Then followed practical directions. The character of an overseer (elder, presbyter, president, or bishop) was depicted in much the same language as in the first letter to Timothy as a person whose conduct would reply to sceptics and controversialists. "There were many persons," he said, "especially of the Judaizing party, who taught the people for the sake of money, and unsettled whole families. One of their own fellow-countrymen had described the Cretans as untruthful, lazy, and gluttonous, and had stated nothing more than the fact. Therefore, it was necessary to warn them in strong language to pay no attention to Jewish traditions and the Levitical law, which were perversions of the truth and its liberty. With regard to such distinctions as 'clean' and 'unclean,' nothing was impure to a pure mind, as also nothing was pure when there was inner defilement. Their asserted knowledge of God was refuted by their actions. Titus must give his audiences the practical counsel of daily life," which Paul described, including, as he had several times done before, the injunction to wives to be submissive to their husbands.

The love of woman for man will ever make it needless to tell her to regard him as the protector of her more interior life and delicate organisation; but it is, nevertheless, necessary that she should breathe the very air of liberty in her relation to him, and be free in soul, in mind, and in body. The coercion of the will of woman in legal marriage has been one of the wrongs of earth which appeal to heaven. In his conception of a Christian wife, Paul compared it with the condition of the women of Israel and of Rome, and did not dream that the mother of the Nazarene was the great ideal.

“The divine spirit showed them the pathway of the spiritual life, the goal of which looked forth upon the hope of the great future, the glory of the Eternal One in man, and of the Master who had sacrificed all for its sake. The Cretans must learn to be gentle; Paul and others had known what it was to live in strife, but the great salvation had shown them how to live the life of the spirit, and to become the heirs of immortality through the Master’s work. Those who belived in that work should live up to its height. If Titus taught these things, he could only say they alone were of any value; while foolish disputes, Jewish genealogies, and controversy about the ceremonial law were useless. Any convert who remained unconvinced, and who wilfully became the occasion of disputes, he had better avoid. When his work was relieved by Artemas or Tychicus, Paul thought he had better join him at Nicopolis, where he had determined to winter, and requested him at once to help Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, with regard to their journey. He hoped their own party would also aid others in necessary requirements,” and the brief letter closed with salutations from all who were with him to Titus and the converts who loved them.

The Last Letter to Timothy.

The final words of Paul breathe of the martyrdom with which his long struggle closed. When that last

letter to Timothy was despatched, he was again imprisoned, almost alone, and looking for the entrance into the immortal life, no longer as the companion of a re-appearing Messiah, who might manifest himself once more to all as he did to himself on the road to Damascus, but through the portals of death, and death at the hands of a Roman executioner.

But through all the shifting scenes of his hopes,—how changed from the commencement of his career we know from his own words—his courage never failed. If this was the end, nevertheless, he had been faithful to duty, and the result was with God. Throughout his letter there is not a word of complaint, hardly a sigh of regret, and not a single expression of fear. He had long pressed on in the pathway; the soul is ever victorious; the truth never dies. His life had gone out abroad in the world, inspiring to pure ends and winged with healing power. Therefore neither the Roman guard, nor the frown of "Cæsar," nor the jeers of the Romans, nor the axe which would fell his grey head, had terrors for the spirit of Paul. All he desired before the last ordeal came was the presence of the one whom he called his "beloved son." His words of counsel and cheer, his memories of the past, and his silence about future work, show that he had done with the world.

He commenced his letter by saying "he prayed earnestly for Timothy, and longed to see him night and day. He remembered the sad farewell, and should see him with joy, since he had never forgotten the earnest faith of Timothy, which he had inherited from his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois. He resembled them; so that he could call upon him to work with the old fire, which had come to him in his first reception of the truth, since none of them must be cowards, but strong in love and a calm spirit. Timothy should not feel his imprisonment nor the work of the Master to be any disgrace, but be ready to suffer also for its sake, since it was part of that divine design which called them forth not to carry out their own

plans, but to labour in behalf of the Christ whose mission, foretold through the ages, was manifested in the life which was victorious over death and corruption. Of this he had been a teacher, and therefore had so deeply suffered. Yet he had neither fear nor shame, for he knew the one in whom he had believed, and felt that he was able to preserve the work committed to him until the day of final victory. His own teachings might furnish him with an example, and he must hold fast the spiritual light which dwelt in them."

"All his friends in Asia had abandoned him, and among them Phygelus and Hermogenes. He trusted all connected with Onesiphorus would be rewarded of heaven, for he had often visited him fearlessly during his imprisonment, and had sought him out until he found him in Rome. He had also shown him great kindness at Ephesus."

That Paul was then in the midst of his deepest trouble is clear. His friends were afraid to be in any way associated with him, or to do anything which might proclaim the fact that they were Christians. The whispers of treachery had reached Nero, and he was determined to suppress the belief which he was informed threatened the integrity of the empire.

"Timothy must be strong in the Master, and what he had heard him publicly proclaim he must commit to faithful men who would become teachers. He should not shrink from suffering as he had done, as a good soldier in the warfare. And a good soldier must hold himself free from all secondary considerations, in order to act worthily of his captain. Even the athlete had to win his course by adhering to rules. And the husbandman who laboured hard was the first to reap what he had sown. He should consider this advice, and remember the Master, who had triumphed over death, and for whose sake he was regarded as a criminal, although the truth was beyond chains and prisons. Therefore he patiently bore everything for the sake of those chosen for the kingdom, that they

might obtain the life of the Christ and its eternal glory. Most true it was that if they died for his sake they should also live with him; if they should deny him, or become faithless, he could not aid them, for he could not alter that law through which his own triumph had come."

"He must tell Timothy to earnestly caution all against foolish disputes, which hindered the reception of the truth, which he must teach clearly and with firmness. He must shun the errors of men like Hymenæus and Philetus, who had been teaching that the resurrection had no connection with the future, the life after death, but was simply a present condition, and had thus destroyed its power among some persons. Nevertheless, the divine stronghold of truth stood in its firmness, and those who followed the Master could not be moved from it, nor could they lead other than righteous lives. The work resembled a large house, in which there were vessels of gold and silver, and also earthen and wooden ones, some for noble and others for ignoble offices. Each man should become a vessel of gold, and of service to the highest ends. Timothy should therefore subdue earthly impulses and devote himself to the higher life, avoiding the follies of useless controversy, and teaching all with gentleness and forbearance, since in this way he might lead many again into a knowledge of the truth. In the future there would be many who would call themselves Christians who would lead lives of abandonment to selfish interests, and who would be of the same order as those who entered the houses of foolish women and led them astray. They were like Jannes and Jambres when they resisted Moses and his work of deliverance, of which they had no true conception. Their follies, however, would become clear to all. Timothy had followed his teaching, and the objects of all his labours and sufferings, and he knew what he had encountered at Antioch, and Iconium, and Lystra, and how he had been delivered from persecution. This was the fate of all who led the Christ-life. Betrayers of the truth might increase, but he must stand

firmly in its behalf, knowing its source, and that from the first he had been trained in the knowledge of those sacred writings containing the promise of the Master. Each of those writings which contained divine inspiration was valuable in many ways, and helped to make a good man stronger. He earnestly charged Timothy before God and the Master, whose judgment and kingdom would appear, to speak the truth at all times and with the utmost earnestness. The time would come when they would hardly listen to it, and would prefer teachers of fables and follies, but he must be calm, and endure suffering with patience, and be a true evangelist; for as regards himself, he was already approaching his hour of martyrdom, and the time of his departure had come. He had fought the good fight; he had finished his course; he had kept the faith. The future had therefore the "crown" of a life consecrated to God, which the Master would give him, and all who had welcomed his manifestation."

"He begged Timothy to come to him as soon as possible. Demas, Crescens, and Titus were all absent in different places, and only Luke was with him. He should like him to bring Mark, who would be of great service. Tychicus would take his place at Ephesus. He wished him to bring the cloak left at Troas in the house of Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. Of Alexander the coppersmith, who had done him much harm, and had strenuously opposed his mission, he must beware. As he had sowed, he would also reap."

"During his first trial, he had been entirely deserted, and none had stood on his side, or attempted to defend his cause. He prayed it might not be laid to their charge. The Master himself had come to him, and strengthened him, that the message might be fully proclaimed before all the Gentiles; and he had been delivered from the jaws of the lion. The Master would deliver him from every evil work, and welcome him in the eternal kingdom,—whose glory would exist through

the ages. He sent remembrances to Prisca and Aquila, and the family of Onesiphorus. Erastus was at Corinth, and Trophimus he had left ill at Miletus. He earnestly begged Timothy to come before winter, and to him several friends and all the brothers sent their best regards."

Considering the condition of Paul, the errors of all kinds which had arisen, and were obscuring the simple grandeur of the truth, the timidity of his own friends, and the intense opposition to the work which had arisen among the Romans, such words as those he wrote amid the darkness were a living testimony to the power given him by the Nazarene. It was the victory of the cross, supreme, unshaken, strong, firm, in the midst of the seething elements of ignorance, bigotry, scepticism, and hatred which surge around the great light of truth. And it lives above and beyond all these things, as Jesus of Nazareth did, by its own immortality. To-day men may crucify; to-morrow they may kneel and bless; but the child of the soul changes not, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Thus it lives, wrapped in its own light, and the heir of the Eternal Kingdom and of God.

THE GENERAL LETTERS OF PETER.

IT has already been clearly shown that Paul was the teacher of the work in freedom, while James at Jerusalem, was spoken of as the head of the Jewish party, although he must not be associated with those narrow Judaizers who followed, and systematically opposed, the teaching of Paul. Peter seems to have given his sympathies to both sections, and there is nothing in his brief writings to prove that he publicly taught the abolition of the ceremonial law. They are apparently addressed to the Jewish converts, among those of the Dispersion, although they may have been intended for both Jews and Gentiles, and the date and the place connected with them are very uncertain. That Peter travelled considerable distances was no doubt true, although it by no means follows that he visited all the provinces in Asia Minor indicated in his first letter. If he visited Rome, it must have been after the martyrdom of Paul; and the same conditions which had produced that event would have prevented any public work on his part, and would probably have led to a like end. That visit is a question of no importance whatever; the Christian society had been founded long before, and the teaching of "apostolic succession," as it is called, is of no value, even if it could be proved, compared with the adherence to the spirit of Christ, whose work was the effacement of all externalism, dogmatic beliefs, and mere traditions.

The first letter of Peter is considered genuine by common consent, and it is therefore a very interesting relic of the early work which followed the manifestation of Jesus of Nazareth. A Jewish symbol appears in the opening sentence, "the sprinkling of the blood

of Jesus," which was an obvious reference to the lamb of the passover and the deliverance. Peter wrote that he "thanked God for the living hope of immortality given in Jesus, the Christ, and for the pure and incorruptible, and eternal kingdom of the spiritual world, which was theirs who had been led into the pathway revealed at the appointed time. They could rejoice in this knowledge, however great might have been their trials, and those only proved the strength of their belief, which was more precious than gold tried by fire, and showed the power of the revelation in the Master. Although they had never seen him, they loved him, and although he was invisible to them now, yet they joyfully believed, and had received the result of that belief, the knowledge of 'salvation,' or the higher life. This the prophets who had foretold it had eagerly dwelt upon, seeking to ascertain, through the spirit of Christ, which had influenced them to write of his sufferings, and their glorious result, in what age he would appear. And they (the Christians) had been shown that they wrote not of their own age, but of the present time; and all this had been explained to them by the teachers of the truth, who had received the Spirit. It had been a design which had interested the angel-world."

"It was their duty to be strong and calm, and filled with the hope given them in the Christ, conducting themselves in accordance with its principles, and to relinquish the evils of the period of their ignorance. As Jesus was pure, so must they also be pure in all things, and thus fulfil the old prophecy. If they looked on the Eternal One as their father, in whom all men were equal, and through whom the result of their own lives awaited each, they should live in watchfulness, knowing that their redemption arose not through the earthly methods which their fathers had vainly supposed, but through the sacrifice of Christ, who had given his blood (or life) as a 'lamb' which was unblemished, who had been foreseen from the earliest

ages, and was at last revealed at the appointed time for their sakes, and had made them believers in the divine power through which he had triumphed over death, in order that their way of life might become divine. Since they had realised this, they ought to live in love, as they had been born again, not of mortal parentage, but of the spiritual power of eternal truth. Men were as grass, and their glory as the flower of the field: the grass withered, and the flower faded; but the truth of the soul lived forever. These were the 'good tidings' which had been taught them."

"All evil thoughts and actions should be discarded, and like those who are newly born, they should desire the pure spiritual food, which would increase their soul strength, for they knew the love of the Master. He had been a living stone, which, although it had indeed been rejected of men, was chosen of God; and they also should be the living stones of a spiritual temple, a holy priesthood, who would offer the sacrifices of the spirit, which alone were acceptable to God, in the spirit of the Master. It was said in the sacred writings: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, chosen and precious,' in which none who believed should be disappointed. For those who believed was its value made known, while to the incredulous, it had been said that 'the stone which the builders rejected had been the head corner-stone,' a 'stone of stumbling and a rock of offence,' for they misunderstood the truth in their alienation from it; and this also had been clearly foretold. But they had become the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, and the people of God, that they might make known the grandeur of the one who had called them from darkness into a great light. In the past they were not his people, but now they had obtained the greatest of favours. He besought them as pilgrims on their way to another land to abstain from earthly passions and desires, which fought against the life of the soul, and would ask them to conduct themselves aright among the Gentiles, so that, although they slandered them, they might recognise their

pure lives, and become witnesses of these facts in a time of trial. It was well to recognise the authority of kings and governors, for they repressed flagrant evils, and by their own conduct they could silence ignorant opponents, refraining from using the freedom of the spirit for any malicious ends. They should love their brothers in the cause, fear God, and honour the king."

Such were the ideas of Peter with regard to the Christian citizen, before, perhaps, persecution and the invasion of his rights had taught him that a time might come when he should be compelled to defend himself with earthly weapons. The most honourable of men have been forced to fight for their liberty, like the Huguenots did in the mountains of the Cevennes. His advice to slaves was written in a spirit of love, yet it could hardly be called a charter of human rights. The sufferings of Christ, which he gave as an example, were endured for a noble cause, and not in mere submission to ignorance and brutality. He had "borne the sins of the people," or in other words, faced all that their condition was certain to bring upon him, that they might win new life, and receive "healing from his stripes." The example quoted by Peter could hardly form a parallel to the case of a much-enduring slave.

The counsel to women is characterised by the same mixture of truth with error. It was well to point out that true beauty was of the spirit rather than external ornaments, and that the pearl of great price, was more than jewels. But this was no reason why a wife should hold the position of a servant, and call her husband "lord." And it was still more strange, in fact extraordinary, that he should have advised the husband to honour woman because she was the "weaker vessel," and *also* a joint heir with him of an eternal life in which woman must necessarily be free! One would have thought that men who had so deeply realised the grandeur of the soul-life would have recognised the equality of woman with man, yet they never attained to any higher conception than that of a gentle acquies-

cence on the part of woman in the conditions of their time.

"All," wrote Peter, "should live in harmony, returning good for evil, and ensuring the life that was to come by their thoughts, and words, and actions, which attracted divine influences. None could really injure them if they acted according to duty, and if they suffered persecution they should rise above fear, and enthrone Christ as an example, holding themselves ready to offer reasons for their belief to any enquirers in a gentle spirit, so that those who slandered them would be rebuked by their deeds. If it was the will of God, it was better to suffer for a righteous life than an evil one. Christ had suffered also for the sake of evil-doers, the righteous one for the unrighteous, in order to lead them all to the divine principle, during which process he had taught even those earth-bound spirits, who from the days of Noah had failed to enter into the sphere of liberty; and as the 'ark' had rescued some through water, so also had they been saved in that divine growth which was the baptism of the spirit and its victory over the body, in a true knowledge of the divine life through the immortality of Jesus, the Christ. He had ascended to a heavenly sphere, and lived therein as one who reigned."

"Since Christ had suffered in the flesh, they must be prepared to meet all things as he did, for it purified from the weakness of sin, and led from the outer to the inner and perfect life. In the past they who were Gentiles had lived in immorality and idolatry, and their companions thought it strange that they had given up such things, and in consequence had calumniated them; but as they had lived so would they reap, by the judgment of the one who was a standard to spirits and mortals. Even spirits of the earth-spheres had heard of the new light, in order that, although they might be spoken of as 'lost' by men, they might attain a higher life in the spiritual world."

Peter, like Paul, in the commencement of his teach-

ing, thought the open triumph of Christ was very near. "The end of all things was at hand, and they should be calm and pray, and never cease to love each other, for love destroyed a multitude of evils. Hospitality, benevolence, spiritual gifts, should all be consecrated to the highest use, that the sacred power of the Master might be recognised, and its eternal glory."

"They must not be surprised at the fiery trial which was testing their strength, as though it was something unexpected and unprovided for, since, as they had become sharers in the sufferings of Christ, they would rejoice all the more when his power was realised by them. If they were reproached for being Christians, it was nevertheless a blessing, for the holy spirit influenced them. Among them there must be no murderers, or thieves, or other wrong-doers; it was only of punishment for their belief, of which they need not be ashamed, and for the name of Christ, the suffering would be glorious. The hour of trial had begun, as it were, in their own temple; and if it began there, what would be the result to those who were without, in the darkness? If the good man had to endure these things, and hardly escaped with his life, where would evil men be found? Those who became martyrs according to the will of God should commit their innocent souls unto the Eternal One, who was faithful."

"The elders among them, he who was of their own age, and had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a sharer of his coming glory, would ask willingly to superintend the little flock, without looking for reward, and without tyranny, but presenting themselves as examples. When the Chief Shepherd should be manifested, they would receive an eternal reward, which would not perish. The younger should conduct themselves with respect to the older members. All of them should act without pride, and submit to the divine decrees, for they would be exalted at the appointed time, casting all care upon God for he would guard them. They must be calm and watchful, for their

enemy, the 'devil,' (opposition) "like a wild beast of prey," was abroad, looking for his victims; and against this they must stand firm, realising that their brothers in other parts of the world endured the same trials. And the Eternal One, who had called them to the immortal work of Christ, after they had suffered a little while, would perfect, strengthen, and establish them. His was an everlasting dominion. This, sent by Silvanus, one whom he considered a faithful brother, he had briefly written, advising them, and declaring this to be a sacred work, in which they should stand fast. She who was in Babylon, chosen as they were, sent salutations, and so did Marcus, his son. He prayed that peace might dwell among all who were of Christ."

Throughout the letter, the great question of the observance or rejection of the ceremonial law is met by silence. It seems, therefore, that although Peter had given his sympathy to the opinions of Paul, he refrained from teaching similar views himself, and had inevitably addressed his exhortations to those converts among the Jews, and the Gentile proselytes, who accepted the old customs as a part of their common religious life. If Marcus and Silvanus were the old companions of Paul, the reference to them proves that both the teachers possessed friends in common; but nothing can be firmly based upon casual allusions and uncertainties.

The Second Letter.

That the so-called "second letter" of Peter was actually written by himself is now universally discredited. The contents differ in the most marked way from those of the previous writings which have been examined, and point to one of those numerous writers who confused the simplicity of the work of Christ with theories, and arguments, and legends of the past, with which it had little connection. Its antiquity may be great; it may possibly have been written as a message from Peter, but that another mind had become the medium of the

work must be clear to the most careless of readers. Since this is the case, there is not the same necessity for dwelling upon its teaching, nor can the cause of truth be served by elevating all the writings contained in the "canon" to the same level. Some were selected for a variety of reasons, the force of which has vanished in the light of another age and a broader apprehension of the truth. It is doubtful if theologians have any true comprehension of the meaning of this letter, which had grown out of circumstances of which no complete record has been left. In the first portion there is a true conception of the Master's work in the statement that its object was to enable man to "partake of the divine nature," and to escape the results of the corruption of mortal life in the world. The methods are explained; "life" and "godliness" are rightly linked together; the entrance into the "eternal kingdom of the Christ" is pointed out. Then the writer passes into an indignant denunciation of persons he considered to be daring heretics. "He did not expect," he said, "to remain much longer in the body, and therefore desired to arouse those he addressed," (who are not named) "to a sense of the truth. He had been an eye-witness of the greatness of Jesus, and had heard the voice declare that he was the 'beloved son.' The prophecies, which could only be interpreted by inspiration, had been as lamps in the darkness before the dawn." After this follows the denunciation of the false teachers, who "denied the Master." The "fall of angels," given as an illustration, is something so opposed to every idea of the result of soul-development, that it can only be understood as a reference to the ancient legends of the Jews, concerning the "sons of God," who fell from their high estate by marrying the "daughters of men." The "sons of God" were the members of one of the grand ancient orders, part of whose work it was to adhere to those regulations which forbade miscellaneous marriages. This had been disregarded, and the arts and sciences taught to the multitude were given at the expense of a

noble race. It is simply impossible for a divine of the modern school, carefully trained in the intellect, and ignorant of the first elements of the science of soul, to explain such passages as these. They require the wisdom of a "Master in Israel," one who knew the real meaning of the "lives" of Methusaleh, Lamech, Noah, and other supposed individuals. Without it, the early portion of the book of Genesis is a sealed volume, which must inevitably become the playground of the sceptic. Viewed as relations of literal facts, the stories of the Garden of Eden, and Noah and his ark, become the height of absurdity. In the light of the science of natural history, such an ark and such contents are recognised as impossibilities. The truth must be sought for in the *origin* of these almost universal legends. The philosophy of Ingersoll will never penetrate them. Nor will the theology of a bishop.

The "dignities" who were not to be "railed at," it has been said, were certain angels of the Kabalistic order, whom the Gnostics and Paul repudiated, but which were held as part of a sacred scheme by the Jews generally. To some extent, this may be true.

Who these teachers were, who taught for the sake of gain, and were immoral and reckless in conduct is not clear. They seem to have been persons who had perverted the "liberty" of Paul,¹ into the license of the pagan, who were "wells without water," and had lost themselves in darkness, and were themselves the slaves of corruption. The writer alludes to the scepticism which had arisen with regard to the return of Christ, and compares it to the old condition before the deluge. He added truly that time in the spiritual world differed from human ideas of it. The "day of the Master would be like that of a thief in the night, manifested when it was unexpected, and the result would be a

¹ Certainly the allusions were not made, as it is the fashion to represent, to Paul himself, of whom Polycarp, a friend of John, and Irenæus, spoke with respect. In the condition of the pagan world at that time, it is not difficult to understand that many accepted Christianity to some degree, while they held to various corrupted religions, and corrupting practices, which were entirely subversive of it.

universal conflagration." The writer may, or may not, have realised that he was prophesying the "fire of the spirit," the same which John the Baptist had foretold Jesus would use in his real baptism of the people, and this, indeed, was and is, capable of producing the "new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

He counselled them to live lives of stainless virtue. His "beloved brother Paul" had spoken of these things in his letters, some of the more obscure contents of which had caused errors among the ignorant, and licentious. They must avoid these, and grow in the love and knowledge of Jesus, the Christ."

The allusions to the events by an "eye-witness," to the "second letter," and to "the brother Paul," do not prove that the letter was written by the owner of the name inscribed upon it, and it bears the marks of some strong personal feeling with regard to the "false teachers" designated, who were evidently the dark shadows which had followed the light of the labours of Paul. It was doubtless the work of a companion of Peter, who had heard him express his opinions, and thought it a duty, or may even have been requested, to give them an emphatic voice. With regard to the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the letter says so little, that it was evidently secondary to the thought of destroying the influence of a new form of opposition, more fatal even than the outspoken and complete unbelief of the great majority of the Jews.

THE GENERAL LETTER OF JAMES.

THE letter bearing the name of James, the leader of the Christian society in Jerusalem, and the martyr to the fury of the Zealots in 63 A.D., is a forcible representation of that calm, reformatory teaching which characterised the first workers, who, it must be remembered accepted the Messiah, but avoided all controversy with regard to the familiar, and no doubt valued customs of the Jewish religion. There is not a syllable of the letter which shows that the writer recognised that the "Christ" included, and therefore superseded, all external forms. It resembles the *Teaching of the Apostles*, and forms a great contrast to the powerful inspirations of Paul on immortality. Nevertheless, the exhortation with regard to a higher life, and the absence of all reference to Jewish rites, show that James and others fully realised that a new and vital system of morality had been demonstrated by the great Nazarene.

The letter was addressed to the Jewish Christians of every land (the "twelve tribes"), and if the author was James, it must have been dated from Jerusalem, where he lived and died, and which he loved better than any other place. It is needless to give more than a synopsis of its contents, which explain themselves.

"Trials were to be met with joy, since they increased faith and patience, and patience led to perfection."

"Wisdom was given of God to all who sought it, and the prayer of faith brought response."

"The doubter was like one tossed by wind and sea, nor could he receive the gift, as he was unstable in all things."

"The poor man possessed the glory of riches, and the rich man had nothing, and was like the flower of

the field which passed away. The sun arose, and the hot wind, and withered the grass, and the flower and its beauty faded, and so perished the external wealth of the rich man."

"The firmness of the man who endured trials, gave him the crown of life promised by the Master. No temptations were sent by God, but arose in the being of man, himself. His desires produced sin, and sin, finally, produced death. But the divine things came from the Father of Light, who was without change or shadow. They were His children in the truth, — the first born among men."

"Self-control should be exercised in speech, and anger should not be permitted, for it was the source of evil action."

"The truth within would inspire the outer life; it was the perfect image of the man and the true law which blessed him."

"The tongue should be held in control, and a pure and unstained religion before God was to visit widows, and the fatherless, and the suffering, and to dwell in purity in the world."

"The faith of Jesus, the Christ, must be no respecter of persons. If any one entered the synagogue in fine clothing, and a poor ill-clad man also entered, the former should not have a better seat than the latter. It was an earthly way of judging people. The poor were rich in their belief, and heirs of the kingdom, while the rich oppressed them by pride and tyranny. The royal law taught love to one's neighbour, and it was a sin to be a respecter of persons. To be guilty of one point was to be guilty of all. They must act in the law of the spirit. Justice had no mercy to the one who was without mercy, and mercy was more glorious than justice."

"Mere intellectual belief was useless if not carried into action, and could save no person. If others suffered hunger and poverty, and were told to be clothed and filled without receiving practical help, it was of no

service. It was the same with belief not carried into practical life. Actions proved belief. Even evil spirits possessed belief of the intellect, and it was barren. Abraham had a living faith, which made him a righteous man. So also had Rahab, who protected the messengers. Mere belief was like a body without a spirit, and was lifeless."

"It was unwise to have many teachers, since they had greater responsibility. Few were without errors, and if they could control their speech, they could control everything else. Such command was like the bridle of the horse, or the rudder of the vessel. And the tongue, small as it was, could kindle a great fire, and corrupt the whole being. It was able to inflame, and was inflamed by evil influence. Man could subdue everything but his tongue, which often possessed a deadly poison. It blessed God, and cursed men, made after his likeness. These things should not be; a pure fountain could not send forth sweet and bitter waters, nor a fig-tree yield olives, and a vine, figs; nor could salt water be sweet."

"A good life showed true wisdom. Jealousy and strife came not of the truth, but were of earth, and the senses, and of evil influences. Where they reigned, there every evil was possible. The wisdom of heaven inspired purity, peace, and gentleness. And the peacemakers reaped the fruit of these things. Anger and fightings grew out of the senses, and also passions, massacres, wars. They asked, and did not receive, because their desires were for earthly objects. The passions of the senses were inharmonious with the divine life, and those who lived for the world, were at enmity with the Eternal One. The divine spirit never influenced in the direction of jealousy and anger, but inspired love. They should be subject to God, and resist evil influences, which would fly from them. As they drew towards the Eternal One, He would grow near to them. Hands and hearts should be free from

stain, and it was better to mourn than to enjoy a false peace."

"None should speak against his brother, as if so, he prejudged the law, and made himself a judge. Only one was the law-giver and judge; he who could save or sentence; none indeed had a right to judge his neighbour."

"Worldly trade was of little value in a life that was like a vapour. None could say he would do anything; but rather, if God willed, he could do this or that. Pride was evil, and he who knew how to do good, and did it not, sinned."

"Those who trusted in riches, would be miserable; for gold and silver became tarnished; hoards of wealth, obtained by defrauding the poor, were like voices which reached heaven together with the cries of the poor. They had obtained it with the life-blood of the defenceless."

"The coming of the Master was drawing near, like the harvest which followed the sowing of the seed. None should murmur because a true judgment was delayed, for he was at the doors. They had examples in the patient sufferings of the prophets, who had spoken inspired truths, and had been blessed for their endurance, which brought mercy at last."

"No oaths should be used. 'Yes' and 'No' were sufficient."

"Those who were suffering should pray; the cheerful should sing; the sick should call for the prayers and healing power of the elders of the society; for the prayer of faith restored many, and sins should be removed. It was good to confess their faults to each other, and to pray for each other, that they might be helped. The prayers of a good man were of great service. Elijah, who was a mortal like themselves, had prayed that it might not rain, and his prayers were answered. So, also, was his entreaty for rain."

"If any one was ignorant of the truth, and became

convinced, it should be known that the one who led him into the right way, had saved a soul from death, and destroyed the possibility of many sins."

Such is an outline of the moral teachings of James, and probably many of his companions. The avarice of the wealthy high-priests of Jerusalem, and their extortions from the poor, had no doubt been the cause of his opinions on the "snares of riches," and positions of authority. His advice to the brothers to confess their faults to each other, had certainly nothing in common with "confession" to a priest. It is one of the most natural of human instincts to ask advice of others, to reveal the conditions of the mind or life, and seek for sympathy and aid. Common sufferings, and a common cause make this, in fact, almost a necessity. But to teach confession to a priest as a duty, and a sacrament, is an infringement of the rights of the individual. The best "confessor" will be the woman of the future, the wise physician of mind and body, who will give the life and the love of her very being to those who come to her with their pain and tears,—who will be a mother to the child, a sister to her fellow-woman, a noble friend to man. The confessional-box of the man-priest, is a travesty on the unaccomplished work of womanhood, with its mighty power of love. Both man and woman can become redeemers in their very spheres, in their presence, in their touch, in their gaze. It was the secret of the power of the Nazarene over the Magdalen. Her magnetic arts, her science of sense, fell at his feet. So, also, fell her tears. They were the offerings of a child of earth on the altar of Love. For the love which endures all things, embraces all things, suffers for others in silence, and redeems with its living pity and sympathy, is of the soul.

THE GENERAL LETTER OF JUDE.

THIS second appeal to Christian converts against false teachers, is supposed to have been written by a brother of James, one Jude, or Judas, but the authorship is unproved. Many had arisen who might have become objects of the denunciations of the letter,—persons who had certainly lost all sight of the true mission of Jesus of Nazareth, in wild speculations, and immoralities which spoke for themselves.

Jude stated that “while intending to write on the subject of their common salvation, he had felt impelled to earnestly counsel them to adhere to their original belief. A silent betrayal of it had taken place, among persons of impure life, who rejected the true work of the Master.” He then referred to Jewish history and legends in a way which showed that he was familiar with the apocryphal writings of his nation. The story of the burial of Moses was one of these. Further, the Kabalistic views of “dignities” and “powers,” rendered even those who were considered “fallen,” part of an invisible hierarchy which the Jews held sacred, and as embodying principles which many did not understand.

“These teachers,” he said, “were hidden rocks in their love-feasts, clouds carried about by winds, trees without fruit, wild waves of the sea, wandering stars.¹ The followers of the Christ had foretold this, and the divisions and disputes they would occasion. They must grow strong in their holy belief, in the aspirations of the spirit, and the divine love, looking for the work

¹ No doubt certain of the *Ophites* and the *Cainites*, who had confused some general truths with erroneous conceptions, and were obscuring the principles illustrated by the Nazarene.

of the Christ in behalf of eternal life. Those who could be possibly rescued from the darkness of these errors they must restore, inspiring them with the love of purity. He commended them to the power of the Eternal One, who had everlasting dominion, in the name of the Christ."

Observations have already been made with regard to "fallen angels," the popular idea of which is entirely erroneous. Probably to this letter is chiefly due that idea of eternal punishment in a hell of literal fire which had such a firm hold upon the minds of the people in the middle ages. It should be remembered that if the "fire" of education and purification is eternal, the *individual* remains in it no longer than is essential for his welfare. If he develops the "Christ" of his nature, he arises from the world of matter. If not, he may long be involved in elements which he has not learned to rightly use and to overcome.

THE GENERAL LETTER TO THE HEBREWS.

THE authorship of Paul with regard to this lengthy and Judaic essay is now by common consent regarded as legendary. It is supposed to have been the work of an Hellenist Jew, and the eloquence with which it is composed, connected with the well-known reputation of Apollos, suggest the idea that he was the writer. The internal evidence of the arguments proved that it was penned before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that Timothy was a contemporary and friend.

It is unnecessary to give more than the heads of the arguments. The writer unfolds what he considers to be the nature of Christ, and places him above "the angels" in his original being, as a person to whom all earthly things were subject. The quotation from the 102d Psalm is very fine, but it can hardly be said that its use in this connection was a legitimate one. The words were addressed to Jehovah:—

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.
They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
As a vesture shalt thou change them,
And they shall be changed:
But thou art the same,
And thy years shall not fail."

"Jesus was made perfect through suffering, and through its last ordeal overcame the elements which made death possible. His experience in the form enabled him to be the high-priest of humanity, and to

realise its nature. His work exceeded that of Moses, for he was not a servant but a son. Unbelief in the work should be discarded; it was a rest for the people. Christ had been divinely called to be a high-priest 'after the order of Melchisedec.' His sufferings in the body had enabled him to attain this perfection."

It may be well to observe that this is one of the most remarkable statements of the essay. The "order of Melchisedec" was the highest secret brotherhood of ancient times known on the earth. It held the wisdom which is eternal and unchanging, and ever lifted above creeds, ceremonials, or aught that is variable and external, for the science of the soul is everlasting, while the religions of the earth take form from the fallible reason of men. Jesus of Nazareth did indeed embody the principles of that order, and this made him the "Christ."

The grandeur of the order is further dwelt upon, and the dignity of its representative in the king of Salem, the "*priest of God*," to whom Abraham rendered honour. In the 110th Psalm it had been prophesied that the "Messiah" should belong to this order,—which was without earthly institution or parentage, but of the eternal world. "It was," states the writer, "superior to the Levitical priesthood, or there would have been no need of the Messiah-priest, of immortal power."¹

Then follow comparisons between the Levitical law, and the new and superior manifestation, the sacrifice of animals, and the sacrifice of Christ. It was the entrance into the mysterious "holy place," forced by Christ "through his own blood." That "new covenant had been foretold."—(Jeremiah xxxi. 33, 34.)

"*This* is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel:—

¹ Even the dress of the Levites, as well as their ceremonial rites, was derived from the Egyptians, and it has been said that Melchisedec was a Buddhist. In common with his order, he must have possessed the spirit of all religious faiths, and the knowledge of their origin.

"After those days saith the Lord,
I will put my laws into their mind,
And on their hearts also will I write them;
 And I will be to them a God,
 And they shall be my people.
 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour,
 And every man his brother, saying 'Know the Lord';
For all shall know me."

Soul development, — God in *man*, has never been more clearly set forth in the words of the ancient seers. And yet the *priest* is as active as ever, and man almost as far off from comprehending the divine principles within him.

"Vicarious suffering was necessary to overcome evil, and the early offerings were types of the offering of Christ;

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;
 Mine ears hast thou opened:
 Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.
 Then, said I, "Lo, I come
 To do thy will, O God!"

His work should therefore be treated with reverence. Faith would lift them above the conflict of the time." The power of faith was next dwelt upon in various instances, — those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; Moses, the prophets, and others. "They were a cloud of witnesses to its power, and should inspire them to run the race with their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was its author, and who had attained victory through his endurance of humiliation. Trials wrought good, and produced the fruit in all that was good. The terrors of the old law had vanished in the glories of a heavenly city, and a kingdom which could not be shaken. The Christ was the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. A spirit of love and purity should *animate* them all, and those in prison should have their sympathy. Timothy

¹ Psalm xl. 6, 7.

had been set at liberty, and the writer hoped to see him, and bring him to visit those whom he addressed."

So much has already been written upon this essay that its main outlines have been largely obscured. It has furnished almost all those "texts" on which theologians have based their material conceptions of miraculous deliverance from sin by the blood of the Nazarene. Regarding the quotations in their proper connection, and as subservient to the argument of the substitution of a "new covenant" for the "old" one, all that they imply is simply this,—that the sacrifice of the Nazarene was a fulfilment of the former offerings, which were types, and that his sacrifice delivered from the power of sin, and made an at-one-ment between man and the divine order. The meaning of the statements is so clear that nothing but hopeless materialism can convict their writer of proclaiming the popular errors which have found their truest voice in that child of "evangelical" orthodoxy, the "salvation army." Even the *faith* in the ideal, righteous man, which is the main life of even that organisation, has wrought some good, at the price of much truth, among the ignorant and desolate poor; for there is a hidden soul in all forms of religion, no matter how strange or even grotesque, which points upward in freedom and beholds some vision of the MAN.

THE LETTERS OF JOHN.

THE hand which penned the gospel "according to John," seems the same which penned the letter bearing the name of the "beloved disciple." It is without arguments. It contains a series of connected statements combined with gentle exhortations. Parts of it are mystical. In a few sentences the grand reality is clearly given.

The writer commences without salutation, and without designation of his own name, or any particular class of converts, with a general declaration that "he wishes to write of what he had seen with his own eyes, and handled with his own hands, subjects connected with the *Word of Life*" (or Immortality Embodied), "which was manifested, and of whose divine nature he was a witness, in order that those he addressed might unite with him and his companions in the sacred belief, and thus become a source of joy to them."

"The message of the living one was that God was pure light. None could be united to that life who dwelt in the darkness of evil; if he accepted the light he was in communion with others who had done so, and the sacrifice of Christ showed them the pathway out of sin. Evil and weakness existed in all, but repentance of these" (relinquishing) "brought the power to cast them away, and to become cleansed from their stains. The life of the living one showed their own evils."

"Jesus, the Christ, was the at-one-ment for them and all the world, and by following in his footsteps they realised what he was. It meant the divine love, and those who said they were of the 'Christ' must act as he did. It was the old truth in a new form; for the

darkness was passing away, and the true light had begun to shine. The light was love, which restrained from wrong. Hatred was of the darkness, in which there was no pathway."

"Sins had passed away through him. He was of the eternal. The writer had written to various classes of persons, among others young men, because they had overcome the power of evil. Love of the perishing was not in harmony with love of the divine. Earthly desires, vanity, and pride passed away, and the objects of the moment, but he who was in harmony with the divine would live for ever."

"The last hour had approached with its spirit of *Anti-Christ*, which was its sign. Some had gone forth from their society who were not of them, and they had done so that their errors might be recognised. But they" (the others) "had the seal of the Holy One, and could discriminate. Falsehood was opposed to truth. And he uttered a falsehood who denied that Jesus was the Christ. This was the *Anti-Christ*, the denial of the divine life in the son. To realise the son was to realise the divine Father. They must stand firm on their first foundation. The promise given was of the life eternal. These things he had written to prevent their being led astray. The spirit of the holy one enlightened them with truth and wisdom, and they must remain in it. If he again manifested himself they would receive him with courage. Righteousness marked those who were his.

"The love of the Eternal One called them His children, and because they were such the world understood them not. What they would become in the future was not yet revealed, but if the living one returned, they would be like him, and see him in his glory. This hope made them desire to be pure. Sin was lawlessness,—disobedience to the spiritual law. He was manifested to destroy it, for he was sinless. Those who did evil could neither see nor know him. Purity was of him; sin was of evil ones; and there had been evil

from the earliest time. The son of God was manifested to destroy evil and its results. The man born into the God-life was pure, and the divine principle remained in him. They were thus distinct from the children of evil, who were without love; for this was the eternal message, that love should reign over all. It was the opposite of the spirit of Cain, who slew his brother because he acted aright."

"It was not to be wondered at if the world hated them. They had passed from death to life, in their love-spirit. Hatred was death. Hatred of a brother was murder, and the murderer had not eternal life within him. He who was rich, and looked upon the needs of his brother with indifference, was without the love of God. Love consisted not of words but of actions. It showed the nature of the truth, and the heart of God; their prayers would therefore be answered. It was the divine design that the son, Jesus, the Christ, should be accepted, and that all should dwell in love. His spirit showed they lived in him."

"All spirits were not worthy of belief. It must be proved whether their mission was of God, as many false teachers and prophets had gone into the world. The spirit who was true might be known by the acknowledgment that the Christ was embodied, and the spirit who denied this (or "severed Jesus,") was of the anti-Christ, which was prophesied, and was already among them. But the one who influenced them, and was in them, was far greater than those who were of the world. They accepted these errors of the spirit. Those were led by a holy influence who would listen to their own teaching. In this way they could recognise the spirit who was true, and the spirit who was false."

"Love was divine, and the one who possessed the love-principle was regenerated, and realised the Eternal One. That love had given them the manifestation of the Son, the first-born one, that they might attain life through him. It was a love of sacrifice and atonement, and the same love should inspire them. God

was invisible to earthly eyes, but His spirit dwelt in the man filled with love. The Son was the saviour of the world. And love beheld Jesus as the son of God. He is love, and the man whose life was love, dwelt in Him. Then they could be without fear in the 'day of judgment;' he who feared was not yet strong in His love, which was their inspiration. No man could say he loved God, while he hated his brother: the divine love meant love of humanity."

"Those who were renewed in true life knew Jesus was the Christ, and were able to obey the spiritual law. The man born of God could overcome the world, and the victory was of the power within. And the victorious one knew that Jesus was the son of God, the one who was born of the soul as well as of the flesh. This the holy spirit truly testified. There were three witnesses" (or proofs): "the inspiring spirit, and the soul, and the outer form, and these agreed in their testimony.¹ It was divine evidence, concerning the Son. He who believed in that Life had the evidence within him; he who rejected believed not a divine testimony. And the testimony was *this*, — that God had manifested eternal life for all, and that this immortality was in his Son. He who had the Christ possessed the life; he who did not possess it had it not."

"All this was written that they might realise their power to attain the eternal life through the Christ. If aught was needed, it would be given. Crime was not the way to attain that life, nor could they pray for life to one who remained in the way of death, although they might pray for the restoration of wrong-doers. Evil came not near those born of God. The whole world lay in darkness, but they knew the Christ had come and illumined them, that they might recognise the truth and live in its spirit. He was the true God who had given them immortality. Idolatry was to be forsaken."

The "severing" or separation of Jesus, which John so

¹ The old version (v. 7), a notorious interpolation, liable to general misconception, is omitted from the revised N. T.

strongly condemned, was the error of spirits and mortals who had not realised the nature of his glorious mission. Cerinthus, who is believed to have taught widely in Asia, had fallen into the error of thinking that Jesus was only a *medium* for the Christ, who influenced him at baptism, and left him at the hour of crucifixion, — thus completely destroying the majestic truth of the higher immortality, or the manifestation of spiritualised man, and representing Jesus as a mere instrument, a *victim*, instead of one who possessed and displayed the interior power of the soul.

The “three witnesses” to this truth are, the spirit of inspiration, prophecy, and truth in all ages; the divine birth of the Man; and his immortal form; his body, soul, and spirit, all of which were in harmony with each other and the master-science.

The Two Letters to Friends.

The two private letters of John to friends seem genuine in their very simplicity and beauty. The first was addressed to a lady who had won the respect and love of himself, and many others; the second, to one Gaius, whose identity is unknown, since the name was as common as that of John or William in our own day.

In the first, the writer “rejoices that the children of his friend had accepted the truth, begs her to remember the spirit of the old law in its new light of love, which was the source of all right actions; warns her against the errors which had sprung up, especially that concerning the embodiment of the Christ, and begs her to hold fast the truth, to offer neither aid nor hospitality to those who were devoted to the evil work of destruction, and closes with the expression of a hope to converse with her, which would render further writing unnecessary. The children of a Christian sister,” he added, “sent their greeting.”

The second letter is equally brief, and John calls himself an elder (or presbyter) as in the former; simply

because in all probability "apostle" was too formal a word to use in private communications. "He trusted Gaius was as well in body as he was in soul. The account of his realisation of the truth, and of his life, from the brothers, had greatly cheered him. Such tidings were the greatest happiness he possessed. His kindness to brothers in the cause, and strangers, were publicly recognised, and they were worthy of it, since for the sake of the Christ they had gone forth as teachers, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. All such persons were worthy of welcome from them. He had written to the society, but the imperious self-will of Diotrephes had rejected his counsel. If he visited it, he should plainly speak of his opposition in word and deed, and his refusal to receive the brothers in the cause, as well as the expulsion from the society of those who did so. Good, not evil, was to be followed. He who led a righteous life was of God; he who did wrong, had not realised the divine nature. Demetrius had received the testimony of all the witnesses, and of the truth itself, and he had given him his own evidence, which Gaius knew was true."

The letter closed in the same way as the other, by the expression of a decision to write nothing more, since the author hoped to see Gaius, to which were added a few salutations to and from friends who are not named.

If these two letters are not sufficiently authenticated to satisfy the elaborate and almost useless series of criticisms which depend on the mere text, they are genuine in their harmony with the first, their natural character, their simplicity, and their clear references to the Cerinthian error. The spirit of John was unquestionably contained in them, and their object was plain.

THE VISIONS OF JOHN.

THE many lengthy and varied attempts to unravel the symbolic language, and the allegorical visions of the *Apocalypse*, might well deter from any further effort in that direction, unless it could be so simplified that the book might be of general use, instead of, as at present, a debating-ground for theologians given to prophecies of very varied character. It is with the hope of rendering the interpretation not only simple, but serviceable, that the following pages have been written, and if any further, or any clearer inspirations with regard to particular portions occur to others, the writer would rejoice to embody them, since although truth is the same, inspirations are progressive, and prophecies are most clearly understood by intuitive minds, in the light of their fulfilment.

From what has already been stated with regard to the true mission and nature of Jesus of Nazareth, it will be clear that any revelation given through his, or other angelic influence, with regard to the future, would unquestionably deal with the struggle of spirit with matter, and the science of soul. This being so, the employment of terms used by those initiated in esoteric knowledge, as well as certain universal symbols, would be sure to be found in it, and hence has arisen the belief that John was the initiate of a secret and sacred order. The whole scope of the writings of the New Testament is opposed to this idea, and, on the contrary, suggest that the sages of the spiritual world, no doubt once incarnated on earth, had formed a plan to reveal the master-science in the first instance, through the sacrificial work of a great soul especially embodied for the purpose, and who, while he would become the illustration of certain grand truths,

would protect them from all possible danger of misuse, by the spirit of love and self-sacrifice with which they were portrayed. That these great spirits did guide and communicate with, and had a right to guide and communicate with, each one of the workers in behalf of this great effort, is undeniably true, unless every page of the remarkable books dealing with their histories is transmuted into the thin vapour of principles which can never reach the people save through living form, and which would make the history of Europe an unsolved mystery.

That, at the same time, they also placed each one in such a position as to depend, not on external guidance, but on his own interior light, and union with his divine selfhood, which united him with the highest influences above, is no less true. All had risen above mere spirit-control; the plane of mere blind instrumentality; all were seers, who beheld and conversed with spiritual beings, as man beholds and talks to man. Jesus conversed with the spirit of Moses; an angelic spirit ministered to him in Gethsemane; he emphasized the right of man to break through the veil between the two worlds, by himself illustrating a condition which ranked between that of spirit and matter, immediately after the crucifixion; he appeared to the dying Stephen; he came with power to, and many times addressed, and strengthened, Paul; spirits of a pure order appeared to Peter, to Ananias, to Cornelius, and others, and the last marked work of the Nazarene seemed to have been to convey, in company with spirits of a high order, certain ideas through the imagery of visions on the interior perceptive faculties of John.

It is hardly necessary to explain why events which would take place in the future, and certain conditions through which the Christ-work was destined to pass, before its full consummation and grandeur could be attained, were given in symbolic language. Mystery protected the prophecies from inevitable abuse, and while the material class of intellects would fail to understand, the intuitive minds would recognise the meaning

of the visions at a period when their unfoldment would be of great value. Until there was a widely spread and free power of vision, it would have been worse than useless to attach to the evils with which the "Christ-spirit" had to contend, special periods, institutions, places. The mirror was given in silence, until the blindness of men was sufficiently removed to "know themselves."

The science of correspondences furnishes, of course, the key to many passages within the book. The unchanging language of symbol in colours, numbers, and qualities, preserves truth sometimes better even than syllables and words, whose significance is liable to become altered and corrupted; thus, for instance, white is always the symbol of purity and perfection; crystal of illumination; black of mourning, obscurity, darkness. A horse gives the invariable impression of swiftness and strength; a dragon, that which slays, devours, and deprives of life; an eagle, that which soars, enters the heavens, obtains inspiration, and so forth. In numbers, one is unity; the monad; masculine, which suffers no change in itself, but sends forth a creative principle: two is duality; the duad; feminine, which changes by addition, subtraction, and multiplication: three, is trinity; the triad; the life formed by spirit and matter, the truth born of love and wisdom: four, is a square, the tetractis; universal brotherhood: five is the number of the hand, or the foot; government; external perfection; the complete *physical* body with the head and four limbs: six, the partial, imperfect spiritual development, or the mingling of spirit with matter; the acquirement of the sixth sense; the six-pointed star of Bethlehem, or individual, rather than universal perfection: seven is the sacred number of spiritual perfection; of universal completeness, and finality of its kind; there are seven primary kingdoms in nature; the spectrum consists of seven colours: the musical scale of seven tones; there are, as Shakespeare delineated them, seven periods in individual life; there

are seven periods in the evolution of a race ; and seven great periods in the universal planetary evolution of man. It is the trinity and the quaternary ; the three-fold nature of the divine, body, soul, and spirit, universally perfected in man. Eight is the square above as well as below ; or brotherhood of the spiritual order : nine is a sacred number ; the number of initiation ; the trinity multiplied by three ; the three-fold development of life physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Twelve is the complete number ; or the universal entrance of the three-fold development in the physical, the intellectual, the spiritual, and the immortal planes, or the divine order on earth.

With these brief preliminary remarks, it is best to let the pages recording the revelation speak for themselves. They open with the statement that it was given "through the divine power of Jesus of Nazareth, for the benefit of his workers, and that he conveyed it through angelic influence to John, who had become a witness of the truth, and of the mission of the Christ, and all that he was shown ; and that he was happy who was able to understand the true nature of the prophecies, and thus live in harmony with the light contained in them, since the time," (of change, of judgment, of weighing the old in a perfect balance,) "was at hand."

Next follow the utterances of spiritual truth to the existing churches, or religious systems, of Asia, in which light was still alive ; while in Africa it had disappeared, and in Europe it was as yet unborn. The words of Isaiah with regard to the darkness of Africa have been long ago fulfilled.

"The spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof ;" . . . They shall seek to the *idols* ;" "where are they ? where are thy wise men ?" "Now, the Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit."

"Harmony and peace are sent to you from that which is of the unchanging order, and from the spiritual perfection which belongs to its higher plane ; and

from Jesus, the Christ, who is the enduring illustration of the truth, the first Spiritual Man, and the superior of all merely earthly authorities. To him, whose love and sacrifice made known the way of deliverance from wrongs and evils; who has manifested the divine kingdom, and the priesthood of God in humanity, the glory and the eternal triumph of truth are attached. He approaches with angel-power; and the Christ-spirit shall be recognised by all, even of those who rejected him who revealed it, and every nation and race of men shall weep over its sufferings, and suffer until they attain it."

"For the Eternal One, all-powerful, the Soul, is the divine beginning and the end, the same in the past, the present, and the future."

"I, John, your brother, and the sharer with you of the persecution, and of the order, and of the patient waiting, which belong to the work of Jesus, was banished in the island of Patmos, for the sake of the truth. I became entranced," (or out of my physical body), "on the first day of the week, and heard a voice like a trumpet," (always the symbol of an awakening to new life), "saying, 'What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches. 'And I turned to see who spoke to me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks,' (or all the organisations existing in behalf of spiritual life among mankind), "and in the midst stood one like the Son of Man, clothed to the feet, and wearing a girdle of gold around the breast. And his head and his hair were white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like refined and burnished brass; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength."

This is the description of living spiritual truth entering into the midst of all the existing religious institutions. The principles represented by the Nazarene made him appear like a great illumination amid external methods

of conveying light ; he was fully clothed ; united to the divine ; saw with the eye of fire (the spirit) ; stood firmly, with perfect power, and gave utterance to eternal truths, which, like a sword divided the evil from the good, and the material from the spiritual. Under his guidance were those lights (angels, or stars, or spiritual influences) which affected the "churches," and his face, or gaze, was that of the sun which dispelled all forms of darkness.

John recorded that he fell down at the feet of this beautiful vision, in terror at its majestic brightness, but was reassured, and comforted, and heard the following words — "Fear not ; you behold the brightness of the living Truth of the soul, the beginning and the end, which has been slain, and has become full of life forever, and possesses the keys of death and of hades," or the keys which unlock the secret of mortal life, and the sources of evil. And he was bidden to write a description of what he saw ; and of what would be shown to him of the condition of the present and the future ; and the symbols of the seven stars, and candlesticks, the stars being spoken of as the light contained within the churches, and the candlesticks as the churches then existing.

Then followed certain messages and warnings to each of these churches, and their luminaries. A star may signify a church dignitary, a high priest, or the spiritual *genius* of the institution. The "stars" which fall "from heaven" may be earthly potentates, high-priests, popes, great poets, great scientists, whose materialism forbids their further existence as lights for the people, and who are attracted in the direction of the earth. To each were addressed words of praise, rebuke, warning, and exhortation to reform.

The first church, (Ephesus), had "left its first love," or charity, and notwithstanding its various good works, and endeavours to attain righteousness, and avoid false teaching, its long endurance, and its refusal to accept

licentious practices, or wild speculations, its light was in danger of going out owing to its forgetfulness of the original truth and its Pharisaical and bigoted tendencies. Reform, the overcoming of the obstacles which had caused its descent, would give the spiritual life of the divine kingdom.

The second church, (Smyrna), although it had many possessions, and had suffered much from the persecution of those who were Jews only in name, had become poor in spiritual strength, and was about to be tried by imprisonments and trouble which would last for a short period. But firmness with regard to the truth would bestow new life within it, and those who perished for its sake would attain eternal life. In a wider sense, the spiritual imprisonment of those who trust in mere external works, and forms, is sure to be accomplished by "the devil," or the power of darkness, and life can only come with freedom.

The third church, (Pergamum), although it had declared the Christ in the midst of enthroned (or powerful) opposition, even notwithstanding martyrdom, had prevented Israel from accepting the truth by welcoming licentious doctrines destructive to the object of the true work, and had been willing to exchange truth and inspiration for popularity, which was the sin of Balaam. It was also guilty of great love of worldly gain and interests, and things which appealed to the senses. The spirit of truth would overthrow it unless it reformed, and those who overcame these tendencies would be vitalised by spiritual food, and would receive the "white stone" of the successful neophyte, the sign of the endurance of trials, with the new name written on it, which none other would know. In other words, union of the soul with the divine, the possession of the crowning corner-stone of the pyramid. This allusion plainly proves the connection of the work of the Nazarene with the "ancient wisdom." It does not prove that John understood the systematic methods of individual initiation.

The fourth church, (Thyatira), although it had accomplished various and increasing good works, and was possessed of much earnest faith, and love of aiding others, had involved itself with pagan beliefs, and practices, and impurities. "Jezebel" was the symbol of unscrupulous, Jesuitical, and deceitful methods, and a readiness to sell truth for selfish interests and worldly success. Since the former could not be reformed, those who attached themselves to them would fall to their level and suffer deeply. The sects which resulted from this union would not live, and the churches would recognise that the spirit searched the interior life, and that each would reap the reward of that condition. To those who had remained free from these ingenious efforts of opposing powers, no direction was needed, except that they should remain firm until the truth triumphed. He who overcame the material, would belong to the enduring order, which would possess lasting authority and power, such as Jesus himself had possessed, and would receive the light of the dawn, which was the herald of the full day.

The fifth church, (Sardis), which was supposed to hold the truth, was almost dead, and did nothing in behalf of the work. It was necessary that it should be awakened, and should revive the little life remaining in it, and should recall the original teaching, since the voice of the spirit would otherwise suddenly proclaim its failure. A few had led spiritual lives, and had attained the inner righteousness, which was pure. He who was thus victorious would be fully clothed in his pure condition, and attain life in the eternal kingdom, being openly recognised as belonging to the true order.

The sixth church, (Philadelphia), had before it an open door, the key of which was in the keeping of the one who had the power of the truth which opened or shut, and had been so far as it was able, faithful to the light of the spirit in its brotherly love. Those who had oppressed it, of the material church of the false Israel, should recognise its truth, and its endurance should pro-

test it in the trials which were about to weigh in the balances those upon the earth. The crown it had won must be held fast, and he who arose above the various temptations of the time would become a pillar in the eternal temple, and a member of the new spiritual order which was founded from above.

The seventh church, (Laodicea), addressed by that which was the beginning and the end, or the Soul, had grown indifferent, and was therefore in a state when it was useless, and would be rejected. It possessed material wealth and power, but was in reality poor, and blind, and unclothed, and must win the real gold which had passed through the fiery trials of earth, and the purity which would be clothing, and the vision of the spirit, which would enable it to see spiritual things. Reproof and condemnation were born of affection, and it must awake and reform. The Spirit stood and knocked for entrance at its door, and those who heard the voice would open, and obtain food. The one who attained the true life would be able to exercise that power which was of God, even as Jesus had himself possessed.

Wide as the significance of this "judgment" is at all times, this portion of the book referred immediately to the conditions of that time, — "the things which *are*." Addressed to seven specified churches of Asia, as symbols of all the religious organisations of the time which ought to have been filled with the Christ-spirit, they also contain a picture of religious institutions generally which have a certain amount of light, which is however in constant danger of becoming dim, or dying out in various forms of externalism.

The sins of these churches were forgetfulness of the original and eternal truths, narrowness, and lack of charity, the absorption of old and worn-out creeds, materialism of various kinds, love of power at all costs, deadness, and hypocrisy, and blindness. All these things are as true of the present as of the past, and all these conditions co-exist with many good works, much earnest endeavour, great endurance, and even

self-sacrifice, in the religious institutions which at this day and hour require to be enlightened as much by the trumpet-voice of the living spirit of the Christ as the churches of the past. Their chief need was, and is, to "listen to what the *Spirit* says," and in worshipping outer forms and practices they become as deaf to that voice as the Pharisees of Jerusalem.¹

The next part of the revelation is concerned with the conditions and events which were to "come to pass hereafter," or the future of that period, and commences with the visions of the "seven seals."

John beheld certain symbolic visions of the guardianship of those unseen powers who were working for, and finally established, a better order of religious and social life on the planet, notwithstanding the opposition and conflict with which these efforts were received. "A door opened in heaven," or an insight into the truth was given, and a trumpet-voice which called on all to awake sounded in the ears of the seer, and bade him ascend, or "come up higher," and see with the eye of the spirit, which alone recognises veiled truths. He was shown the vision of one enthroned, who resembled the purity and intensity of "the jasper and sardine stones," and was surrounded by an emerald rainbow; in other words, he saw the glory of pure, untainted wisdom, the supremacy of good, or God, which, in a heavenly sphere, is always recognised as the true judge and ruler of those who dwell therein, and the hope and universal promise of the spring-time of perfection, of the Easter of the earth. The "ancients" around it, twenty-four in number, and wearing white garments and crowns of gold, represented a complete dual number of those who had received this wisdom and love, and had attained great power and purity, the great sphere of the sages and planetary spirits who behold past, present, and future, and who are ever sending forth

¹ It is almost needless to point out that these exhortations possessed a far deeper significance than could be attached to the churches specified. As a matter of mere fact, Smyrna is the only city which has existed to the present time. It still has a Christian community.

their spiritual energies on the earth in behalf of higher conditions.¹

The seven ever-burning lamps before the throne, the seven spirits of light, the *Elohim* principles, were the seven Æons of the Kabala, or the perfect series of illuminating powers connected with all-seeing wisdom. The seven "spirits of Isaiah II, 2," in a reputed prophecy of Jesus of Nazareth, and the seven great virtues, are thereby symbolised. The calm sea of crystal is a mirror of spirit in its purified condition, reflecting, and resulting from, the ever-burning lamps. The very ancient figure, known in hieroglyph to nations of remote antiquity, of the four living creatures, one like a lion, the second like an ox, the third like a man, and the fourth like an eagle, were pictures of the various qualities of the emanations proceeding from the light of Love and Wisdom, which have assumed form in physical and spiritual matter; the physical, the mental, the spiritual, and the celestial, — free, godlike, and inspired. These symbolic figures were at an early date associated with the four Evangelists; the "eagle" of inspiration having been very naturally assigned to the seer, who was John. They form the reproductive *cross* of nature, — attraction, repulsion, generation, and *inspiration*, or the inner, divine soul-force. All are winged, the total number of wings being twenty-four, (together making the dual twelve), or capable of descending and ascending again towards the perfect condition, ever at work, full of exterior knowledge and interior vision, and attracted to, and proceeding from, the divine, which is eternal "before and behind," in the past, and in the future. The accomplished work of these ever-living forces in forms, which finally "gives glory, and honour, and gratitude" to the Wisdom, which is always enthroned in a heavenly condition, and is ever-enduring, inspires and impels the

¹ The twenty-four "ancients" have been interpreted as symbols of the great cycle of the precession of the equinoxes, astrologically known in round numbers as 24,000 years; but the vision of John is clearly connected with the result of the appearance of Christ on earth, and the concentrated efforts in behalf of the principles represented in the "Lamb," which date from a comparatively recent period.

angelic orders who witness their victory to acknowledge with joy the power of the "Holy One," and, desiring no honour themselves, and no other reward than the triumph of truth, they "cast their crowns" before the throne, and recognise in new forms, and afresh, the glory of the one Eternal Love and Wisdom, which creates all things through its own power and will, and ever wills what is true and beautiful. They "praise God" by their never-ceasing efforts for the good and divine, and by the unceasing employment of all their faculties of being in the grand work of life and progress.

Near this eternal source of power, John was shown a volume full of wisdom, which was sealed with "seven seals," in other words, the knowledge containing the mystery of Life, which held within it the "divine name," or the "word of power." The "book" existed, but it was closed to the multitude, and none had been able to reveal it of the heavenly order, or on the earth, or to see it in its opened perfection, for the time was not yet ripe. Recognising the glory of the knowledge contained within it, the seer wept that it remained unknown, but was reassured by the words of one of the angelic order, who said, "*Weep not: behold the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has been victorious, and has power to open the seven seals.*" In other words, the Nazarene had been the chosen instrument for the accomplishment of the revelation of the life-giving and concealed wisdom. And he was shown, and the *principle* he represented, and does represent, not as a lion, but as a lamb which had been slain, which had seven "horns," or perfect power, and seven eyes, or perfect vision, full of the divine illuminations which were to be sent forth on the material world. The lamb alone was able to take the volume, and reverence was paid to the strength of that which was able to reveal, and the joy of the New Era, was symbolised by music

and incense,—or harmony, and the fulfilled prayers and aspirations of the great and wise of all time. A “new song” was sung, or a new dispensation inaugurated, and the “lamb” was declared to be the one “*worthy*” to open the seals, because it had been slain, and had thus paid the dread price of love for all humanity, in all nations, who were to become a divine kingdom, and “priests” of God, or of the eternal order of perfected life. The angel powers united their forces, and gathered in myriads towards the central source of light and power, acknowledging and aiding the strength of the “lamb,” who had been slain for the sake of the wisdom, and glory, and blessing of the great work. In this acknowledgment the silent voice of all forms of created life united, since it was the one truth, the end of existence, and the glory of it, and their being prophesied of the eternal dominion of the “lamb,” and of the Central Spirit, or God. The emanations which had produced their lives were necessarily in harmony with this universal utterance of nature, and the angel powers revered in all things the source of Life and Light.

The “lamb” of which the Nazarene was the great illustration is the divine part of man’s nature, the love, the interior wisdom, the illuminated soul, the “Christ,” the immortal part of his being. The slaying of the “lamb” has not been only the crucifixion of the Nazarene, but the destruction of the wise and the good instincts, for on these the material, and the selfish, and the merely physical, and the merely intellectual, make war. Therefore the “slain lamb” was the eternal symbol of the “crucified Christ.” It was known to the ancient Egyptians, who as spirits of a high order were in the deepest sympathy with the holy work of Jesus. All this is more than sufficient to account for the Gnostic and Kabalistic elements in the writings of John.

After this manifestation of the one who was able to open the sealed volume, came a vision of the conflict

which followed on the earth between the power at work for the divine order, and the materialism of men. A voice from nature itself, when the Nazarene appeared, that is, opened the "first seal," and made the first effort towards the revelation,—had cried "*Come!*" And that first appearance was the individual, the necessary illustration, who was crowned, and sat as a warrior on a white horse, that is, he was armed and uplifted by strength, capacity to go forth, and purity, to arise as a conqueror of evil. It was the type of "peace on earth and good-will towards men," and the great prophecy to which allusion has already been made of "that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves," crying evermore in a language too deep for utterance, "*Come!*"

And when the second seal was opened, and the work of the Nazarene had been followed by the utterance of the truth concerning it and him, it called forth "one on a red horse," or the swift spirit of war, who took peace from the earth, and, as Jesus had foretold, bore "a sword." Notwithstanding this, the living voice of nature drew it forth, and said "*Come!* It must, be,—strife and conflict notwithstanding!"

On the opening of the third seal, when the work had advanced another stage, a yet deeper trouble appeared—"one on a black horse," with a "balance" in his hand, or one resembling night, the eclipse of truth, who had a balance, but weighed nothing. An inspired voice declared that there was starvation, little grain, the staple of food, but much that was useless for nourishment. It was the type of bigotry, cruelty, injustice, and the selfishness which demands an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Against this the spirit of the Nazarene had come into direct conflict.

On the opening of the fourth seal, another effort of nature in her inner working in response to the light above, a still greater trouble arose, and death was seen enthroned on a pale horse, followed by "Hades," or the rapid sending of numbers of mortals into the spiritual world. And the work of these three conflicting

powers killed a large portion of the truth-speakers by violence, silence, and by the "wild beasts," or the "lower self" in activity, not only in the Roman Colosseum, but far beyond, and in a far later age, even within the supposed sanctuary of truth itself. It was a type of the corruption and destruction of truth and truth-speakers.

On the opening of the fifth seal, men began to recognise the great martyrdoms of those who had been most persecuted, and insulted, and tortured, and rejected, and they were seen no longer as "heretics of holy mother church," but as living souls, who had suffered for divine truth, and who were beneath that altar of sacrifice through which the spirit wings its way upward from matter. Their lives of blood and torture spoke with a powerful voice, calling to the divine, the "holy and true," to witness their innocence, and to justify their efforts, and in response each obtained the "white garment" of spotless life, and were given rest until the period of the persecutions for truth should be finally at an end, and therefore ceased to suffer further in its behalf.

On the opening of the sixth seal, there was a "great earthquake," or, in other words, a revolution of ideas in social, political, and religious life, which shook the "old earth" to its foundations. Old creeds, old customs, old governments were weighed in the balances of a broader and higher spiritual light, which penetrated the minds of large masses of men, in behalf of justice and freedom. The "sun," or the old Christian church, so-called, — and this includes all orthodox denominations of various kinds, — became "black," or ceased to give light, or to satisfy the highest aspirations, and thoughts, and knowledge of the people. All nations or states, ("the whole moon"), were involved in these wars and tumults, which form a part of the birth-struggle of a new era, and bloodshed, perhaps even the extremes of anarchy, socialism, and nihilism appeared, with bloodshed within as well as without the states. The "stars of heaven,"

or those who had been looked upon as lights, guides, and governors, "fell to the earth," like "unripe figs" from a tree shaken by a great wind, and among those "stars" were high-priests, popes, poets, literary men, and scientists, who did not possess the knowledge and inspiration necessary for the enlightenment of the people, and whose continued authority would only mislead them, and prevent a grander and vaster view of religion and nature from being understood and appreciated. The "old heaven," or the old view of spiritual existence, and life after death, was removed, and the most prominent and marked institutions of the earth, the "mountains" and "islands," were moved from their old places. The old rulers, those who had constituted the old ideas of power, and strength, and dignity, the kings, the rich, and the military chieftains, the oppressed and enslaved, and the free from oppression, the mentally weak and the mentally strong, alike recognised that in the light of spiritual truth they were equal, and of no more importance as regarded their individual worth, and no more worthy of honour, than the poorest of their fellows; and those who had betrayed the trust that had been committed to them for the sake of others, desired to conceal their real condition from that searching "wrath of the lamb," or that power of the divine, and the true, and the spiritual, which had been so long despised, and which, in sure and certain "judgment" and retribution, exposed the emptiness of the old laws and institutions of the world. Against that power, "who is able to stand?"

All this had been necessary to prepare for the opening of the last "seal," or the complete unfolding of that sublime principle illustrated in the Christ, unto whom had been given the "sealed" volume. A fresh power swept the earth, something greater than new belief, and new knowledge, and new spiritual manifestations, which proceeded from angels, whose influence penetrated the planet ("stood at the four corners") and pro-

tected it from the violence of natural forces, and general social disintegrations, and blind iconoclasm, until the work was completed. Then appeared the angel of the "sun-rising," or the dawn of a perfect day, the great *Osiris* of all religions, or the Christ-angel, who held the "seal of the living God," or the great secret of divine humanity. And he forbade the further progress of destructive efforts until the truth of all that had been great in the old was recognised, or the "true servants," of north, south, east, and west were openly stamped with the signet of eternal truth, which soars beyond race, creed, or colour, and points to universal brotherhood. There were 144,000, a mystic number, that is, a larger number than had been suspected, a *perfected* number, in each "tribe" of the "children of Israel," or the "faithful" in every race. The "twelve tribes" enumerated, symbolised those of each nation and each religion who had been inspired, and righteous in act as well as in belief, and who had acquired the perfect rule of the soul. The self-sacrificing, the illuminated, the truly great, among not only Christians, but Jews, Buddhists, Parsees, Pagans, Mahomedans, and many other followers of more or less grand teachers of the world, were found to be of those who had conquered "self," and who had developed the nature of the "lamb" within them, or the light of the soul. The vision of the "twelve tribes" is unmistakably explained by the further vision of the multitude of *all* races, who had gathered in that spiritual sphere which is of the Christ, and who wore "pure white robes," and held the "palms" of victory. Their presence there declared as with one voice, "a great voice," that "salvation" was of God, — the triumph was of the soul. With this the angelic powers were in perfect harmony, and the soul-forces of nature which work for all men, and had revealed this mighty truth, declaring by all they bring forth that all that was and is of good, "glory, and wisdom, and power," was, and is, eternally divine.

On the enquiry of the angel-voice of the "ancient," addressed to the seer as to who these "redeemed ones"

were, as if he knew that the spirit within would truly answer, the seer acknowledged that the angel well knew, and the voice replied that "they were the spirits of those who had sacrificed all for truth, and had attained purity through the life of the divine soul, through the crucifixion of the physical." It was no easy task for man to become spiritual amid universal physical surroundings; therefore, they were of the eternal order, before the "throne of God," and in harmony with its life and light at all times, and were strong with a never-failing strength derived from the Central Source of Life. They had risen above "hunger and thirst," above all earthly desires, and the light for which they had struggled, "the sun," had become a joy; for the Love and Wisdom of the soul was a guide which gave them eternal life, and the knowledge of the Light of all things swept from them all thought of the prolonged sufferings of the past.

Among these must be numbers of the martyrs, the heretics, the reformers of the Christian era, who had indeed literally given their blood, as Jesus of Nazareth also gave his, for the sake of truth, progress, and the benefit of others.

The opening of the seventh, or last seal, the perfect unfolding of the Truth, was followed by "silence in heaven" for a brief period. This means, that for a wise reason, the revelation was known, and kept secret until it could be safely projected upon the planet, since spirits of evil, the earth-bound and creed-bound, are ever on the watch to frustrate and hinder the designs of those who work for the conditions of the "lamb" in the world, particularly when those designs could be immensely hastened and helped through chosen human instrumentality. Especially is this the case with the opening of the seventh seal, or the destruction of death, since perfect humanity, or the Christ-man, the higher race, must be born through a higher order of parentage, and as the earthly conditions both among spirits and mortals in the past, have tended to separate "the

woman" from "the man," or the interior life of love from the exterior life of intellect, so in the living illustrations of this truth, in the present, is it the effort of spirits and mortals to separate those whose unity, harmony, spiritual condition, and strength would enable them to embody the power of the soul, and give a light to the people which will be the foundation of new and lasting reformation, and a grander science than the world has ever before experienced. The difficult passage into the King's Chamber of the Pyramid, symbolises the last obstacles which have to be overcome by those who first traverse it. It corresponds to the completion of the initiate's "great work."

In this fresh effort "seven angels," or perfect and harmonious angelic powers, were no longer indirectly, but actively, engaged; that is, they exercised not an initiatory, but a positive power, on the earth, and gradually yet rapidly made known the necessities, the truth, and the designs of the "Christ-reign" by "seven trumpets," or at last the fully uttered and unmistakable voice of truth.

Before any sound was heard an angel stood at an altar who united the hopes of the spiritual world with the aspirations, and labours, and prayers of all the best and wisest of earth, including the prophetic knowledge, and lives of the ancient orders, who *knew*, and dared not *make known*, because the time was not ripe. These ascended to, and made themselves felt within, the Soul of All. Then the angel threw "fire," — spiritual power, — from this "incense," on the human race, and responses followed in "thunders," or stirring events, and "voices," or new utterances of truth, and "lightnings," or illuminations from above, in many human beings, and an "earthquake," or a fresh "shaking of the dry bones," in existing institutions.

After this followed the final work, which, passing through various stages tending to human purification, was to be universally understood.

The first "trumpet," or voice, or manifestation of

the "ancient wisdom," occasioned revolution. It was not welcomed, and many things suffered in adapting themselves to the new influx of the idea. A "third part," that is, a large proportion of the existing beliefs and conditions, was "burnt up" or consumed. *Evolution* began to show its light amid much strife, and nature, and the old growths, and the old pastures, or religions, became reduced to law.

The second influx caused the removal of a "burning mountain," which was extinguished in the "sea;" in other words, the vast and prominent error of a literal hell was destroyed in the widespread ocean of spiritual truth and enlightenment; yet the knowledge of *spiritual law* destroyed also many beliefs of a future condition which had been taught by uninformed spiritual agency. These were teachings which could not live in the light of that revelation, and "ships" which seemed capable of bearing many multitudes, which nevertheless sank.

The third influx, or revelation, produced the downfall of a "great star," which burned like a torch, and embittered even a large portion of "the waters," and "the rivers," and the very fountains. This was a fresh conception of the unchangeable laws which govern the human race, and the newly-formed ideas of "heaven" fell beneath the knowledge of the *evolution of the soul* through the ages, and the way of the attainment of immortality, which embittered much of the very teachings of the "sixth seal," or the spiritual light which had been so eagerly welcomed. A large number found the "waters" bitter, and "died," or ceased to become the recipients and teachers of a universal spiritual philosophy, which declares that "heaven" must be earned, and that the soul "comes from afar," and is not born in a single life, any more than it is bound for immediate existence in the spiritual world.

The fourth influx, which showed the philosophy of man as mortal and spirit in the light of angelic wisdom,

and which turned his thoughts in the direction of *interior development* rather than exterior spirit-control, and taught him of the God and heaven within, partly obscured the light of what had been considered as a new "sun," influenced the widely-spread reformatory societies in all civilised states, and extinguished the light, or the instructions of many who had appeared to be "stars," or true guides.

None of these stages of the opening of the seventh seal, or these necessary teachings with regard to the nature of man, his past, his present, or his future, were welcomed. And yet they were prophecies of, and leading in a straight course towards, his divine freedom.

An eagle was then seen by the seer, or the powerful inspirations of truth from above, which showed that the three remaining stages would cause "woe," or great trouble and conflict.

The fifth influx caused the fall of another "star," or light, the light of modern science, which, being wholly material, at this stage fell, among the great thinkers, to its own level; the laws of spiritual evolution, and of incarnation and embodiment being widely understood.

The "angel," or the spiritual order, through whose power these were made known, possessed also the "key of the abyss"; that is, the knowledge of the entire spirit-life connected with the planet, and the capacity to make it known. A large portion of it was found to consist of elemental and elementary spirits, who obscured the light and injured the pure air of heaven by their influence and partial representations of truth, or entirely false teaching. Large numbers of persons having become conscious and unconscious "sensitives," but not perfect and purified seers, had also become open to any spiritual influences which were around them. These emanations from the undeveloped and vast life of the past, had no power to injure any true living growth, nor any human beings who understood the power of their own divine souls, and were in

harmony with eternal truth. But they were the controllers and inspirers of those who attempted to establish a higher social order on the earth by violence, fraud, selfishness, or any sort of deception, and their work is that of the scorpion, instead of the "love of the Lamb." The strife would be short, "five months," or the complete period necessary to *break through* this condition, this false attempt at true government, among the reforming party of the human race. This has been especially the result of the five years' planetary perihelia, which has magnetically affected the earth very powerfully from 1880 to 1885, or, in more correct chronology, 1884 to the close, 1889.¹ Until this was over, many would suffer through the deceptive power of these influences; some would wish for annihilation, or the old material views, rather than life amid apparently unceasing chaos; but the life of the spirit would be too clearly perceived. Some would be misled with regard to reforms and truth, and yield conscience, and duty, and the power of their own souls, to exterior influences, which would inflate only to beguile. These spirits would personate angels, and appear with "crowns of gold" and the "faces of men," and the gentle characteristics of womanhood, but they would be known by their carnivorous teeth, or their love of rending, destroying and injuring. Like an army prepared for war, with apparently iron breastplates and swift and mighty power, they would appear, and sting many, and pass away again, revealed to, and understood by all. Their first appearance would be angelic, or apparently wise, but their power to work mischief would be felt in the results of their efforts, that is in their "tails." The ruling genius of these "locusts," who consume "grain," or swarms of *winged*, or known and unknown spiritual influences, would be purely destructive,

¹ In the foot-note (p. 8), the correction should simply have been "This would make 1877 the *real* date of 1831," which was revised too late for the press.

(*Apollyon*, or Destroyer), and therefore injurious until it was fully realised.

Among these are found spirits who deny spiritual evolution; who declare Jesus of Nazareth was a myth; who ridicule human religions and sacred writings, because they do not understand their sources, and esoteric truths; who teach that there is liberty in promiscuous intercourse between the sexes; who assume great names, and supreme authority; who control and obsess individuals until the power of their own spiritual self-hood is paralysed; who work by psychological power for absolute control, and the destruction of all reforms, however firmly based on eternal truth, which are removed from sectarian ends, and the triumph of earthly churches. Among these last, the Jesuit spirits may be found, who have to some extent studied occult forces, and exercise the most subtle and dangerous influences over those whom they deceive, personating the illuminated sages and teachers of old, declaring that their methods of reform will inaugurate the Christ-reign, and secretly working to destroy all power and all reforms which cannot be connected with ecclesiasticism, and to injure and persecute the instruments thereof. True to their ancient discipline, they will sacrifice those who serve them to their designs, and send them forth to sad awakenings. Therefore, these also are really destructive, and not reformatory, and are linked to the selfish instincts of men rather than the divine and glorious part of their nature, which is receptive to true Wisdom and perfect Love, and stamps the "true seal" on their foreheads. Unfortunate are they whose eyes are opened to the reality when earthly life is past, for the "sting" will be felt and the awakening is sure!

"Not by slander, not by persecution, not by dynamite, should I have laboured for others," will be the cry of many a sighing spirit.

The phase of the first struggle of man generally to attain seership and to communicate with the unseen

world is called a "woe," or trouble; and there are said to be two other stages of trouble connected with the opening of the last seal, which immediately follow. That the first is a trouble none will deny; it constitutes the passing through the "dwellers on the threshold," which man has to face and overcome, before he can possess the clear sight which will forbid him to deceive or to be deceived.

The sixth influence from above resulted in a purification, by means of natural processes, of portions of the civilised races living on earth, with a view to higher evolution. An influence proceeding from a divine source would gradually sublimate its surface and change its atmosphere, and little by little spiritualise numbers of persons in the physical being. The four "angels" bound at the river Euphrates, the name of the fourth river in Eden, signify the fourfold nature of man, which has been divorced and withheld from harmonious action, or at-one-ment, and the manifestation of which in diviner forms of manhood would be made at a time when there were influences abroad which would be destructive to large bodies of individuals who were of a very physical type, and negative to disease. A destructive army, signifying pestilence, was breathed out from the earth, rapidly developing, (symbolised by horses), and devouring, (symbolised by the carnivorous head of the lion.) The three plagues were "fire," that which consumed, "smoke," that which was impure in emanation, and "brimstone," that which was stifling and poisonous in character. They were breathed out of the mouth, signifying injurious elements in the atmosphere, which those who ate largely of flesh, were addicted to stimulants, and sensual luxuries of all kinds, would not be able to survive. The physical life would become shortened, the spiritual one lengthened, as best adapted to survive great physical changes of all kinds, and noxious emanations. A third portion of civilised life suffered from these epidemics, and various modern forms of disease. Those, however, who escaped went on with the worship of mammon, the idolatry of external things, the idols of gold

and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood,—the wealth, the houses, the various collections of the fashion of the hour, which were spiritually worthless; war still prevailed; so also did “sorceries,” or materialistic methods of studying nature, and thereby misusing her forces; and so did the pleasures of sense, and selfishness, and greed. The “sting of the serpent” was in the results of these pestilential but purifying changes, which were afterwards recognised as the destroying power of the material over the material, in persons and in races. It is impossible to convey a perfect interpretation of a prophecy which is now *in course* of fulfilment, for the opening of the “seventh seal” does not refer, as very ingeniously supposed, to the period of Nero, for his reign only beheld the first struggle of the principles connected with the Christ-revelation, and seven denotes completion, and their perfect unfoldment on the planet. This will be understood from what follows, and the whole of the remainder of the visions is concerned with the events connected not only with the complete opening of the concealed truths, but with their embodiment and practical development in human life.

The final revelation is spoken of as preceded by the appearance of an angel of the heavenly order (a supreme truth), who came “down,” or was incarnated, and was surrounded with “a cloud,” or a host of pure spirits, and over whose head was a “rainbow,” or the symbol of hope and deliverance, whose face also was illuminated, and whose feet were of fiery brightness. He symbolised the Truth, inaugurated and designed by angelic agency. The “little book” in his hand was the perfect knowledge of nature, for the angel stood on land and sea, and the voice was one of vast power. It produced seven reverberations, or the perfect and universal response of nature in her full strength. This knowledge possessed immense influence. The seer was about to record these great utterances, but was forbidden by a divine monition, which declared that they were to

be sealed at that period, and not even mentioned in allegory. The universal truth, represented by the angel on land and sea, who lifted up his right hand to heaven, was that which was eternal, and which could not remain concealed, but which would be made known through the "voice of the seventh angel," which completed the sacred design, the "mystery," in accordance with the great hope experienced in all ages by the seers of earth. It was growing clear through the "descent" or incarnations of great and wise spirits.

The seer was bidden to take the book, and eat it, and although the taste seemed sweet in the mouth, its assimilation was bitter; in other words, although it seemed easy to speak this truth, its practical reception and its work within the nature of man would be difficult. After this, however, the seer was able to behold the work of the "seventh seal" in the future, upon the races of mankind.

A heavenly measure was given to him, by which he would be able to accurately define the "divine temple," and the true altar, and those who would "worship therein," or be of its order. The "outer court," which had been known to all nations in their various religions, was not that which was to be described, but the inner temple. The "holy city," or the true and just social condition which environed the temple and was a part of perfected humanity, would be despised by the earthly religions for "forty-two months," or until a period of completion (forty) had taken place, and the old would survive a little while only to pass into the new.

But there would be two witnesses who would utter the truth, although they had been "clothed in sack-cloth," or openly humiliated and disregarded, and who would be like "olive-trees," and "candlesticks," or the peace, and harmony, and light of the world. Many persons and institutions have not hesitated to appropriate these symbolic "witnesses" as prophetic representations of their own particular conditions. They

have been said to be Peter and Paul, the two principal Christian churches, and even individuals of various periods. They are the eternal voices of Love and Wisdom, or the Christ-principles, which are attacked and opposed in all ages, but who are capable of "devouring their enemies," and "who slay all who desire to kill them." As often as they are powerfully represented in any righteous cause they are able to influence seen and unseen spheres of existence, and to show that the "waters" of earth are only blood, that its spirit is but conflict, and to cause "plagues," that is, create a fresh warfare in the direction of truth, whenever their voices are loudly heard. After the work of each effort in behalf of the Christ-principles is completed, the "beast of the abyss," that is, the materialism of every kind in humanity, which arises against reforms in its interest, *apparently* kills them, as apparently Jesus of Nazareth was killed. And for a while their "dead bodies" lie in the highway of that city spiritually called Sodom, or Egypt, which was also the same place in which the Nazarene was crucified. The "city" is the intensely physical, external, materialistic condition of men which corrupts their noblest instincts and powers, the very sources of life, and in which the animal nature rules, as in many of the old cities of the East, and in Egypt, where truth had been forsaken for idolatry. The license of the outer, invariably slays the strength of the inner, yet, though all nations looked upon these "slain lives," during a brief period of darkness, and did not suffer their struggle to be forgotten, but continued to condemn them, and although rejoicings and merriment followed the crucifixions of truth, whose voice tormented, or awakened and disturbed from the slumbers of men, yet the Easter of all these efforts came. The divine life was in them, and they arose, and were then regarded with reverence by those who beheld them in their true light. And a heavenly voice was heard saying, "*Come up hither*; ye are of our order, eternal, just and true." They ever ascend, and angels,

("a cloud") are seen around them, and their enemies are compelled to behold their inevitable triumph. At the time, the truth shakes the corrupt condition like an earthquake, and a certain portion of it falls; and some of it is altogether destroyed, while the remainder of those who had been blinded by matter, fear, and are then able to see that the supposed "work of the devil," is the "work of God." For the "devil," — that "old serpent," is so subtle that it always represents opposition to the work of Love and Wisdom as right, and respectable, and just, and moral, and wise.

This vision was especially necessary in the revelation connected with the seventh seal, as the warfare of the truth in Europe, after the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, had assumed, and would constantly assume, new forms, and the conflict would be severe. Therefore it was symbolised in the continual slaying, and the eternal triumph of the two powers which he so grandly represented. This trouble would continue until the very last hour, and the opposition to truth would array itself within what appeared to be the very stronghold of those principles, and by the same law which makes the "Judas," the "Satan," the corrupted "Egypt," seem superior to the Christ, to the divine, to the perfectly and lawfully pure.

After this world-wide trouble had finished its course within the very centres of spiritual work, a third affliction quickly manifested itself, the result of the voice, at last heard, of the "seventh angel." On this new influx of light, or the completion of the revelation, angelic powers responded with the declaration that "the kingdom of earth is become," (or rather was recognised) "as the kingdom of the Master-Spirit, the Soul, and of the Christ, which should enjoy an eternal reign." The truth was at last seen that the sole end and object of material life was to evolve divine manhood, and immortality on earth. It was "unsealed;" familiar to all; uttered under angelic direction; and the further work was to carry it into practical effect. The

angels of the planet, who had foreseen the end, rejoiced that the Eternal One reigned, and that His power was manifest in yet another world among the myriads that are, and that are yet to be. Rebellion widely arose against this universal truth, but the "time of the dead to be judged" had fully come,—of those who were entombed in creeds and exterior religions ; as also the time had come to place the inspired, the seers of all ages, the pure sages of ancient and veiled orders, and all, however obscure and humble, who had known the inner light which mirrors God,—in their true position, and to finally subdue the opposition of those who "destroyed the earth," or stood in the way of its highest development.

The "temple of God was opened in heaven ;" in other words the Christ-sphere began to be realised as living power ; within whose order was the ark of safety, the true salvation for the human race ; and from this sphere came inspirations, utterances, wide-spread influences, the "shaking of the dry bones," and the palpable power of the spirit, or the "hail" which is felt, and heard, and seen, by all.

All these periods of judgment were periods of purification, in which earthly events, disasters, rebellions, and conflicts, ever resulted in a new stage of progress.

Then was shown the "great sign" of the truth, which was "in heaven," or everlasting. The "woman," illuminated with sun-like truth, is the divine soul of man. Under her feet is the "moon," or external government, and earthly kingdoms, which she does not need or desire, and has risen above. On her head is a crown of "twelve stars," or a perfect development of all the interior powers and faculties, which are the crown and light of the soul. And although alone, or virgin, she was a mother, and awaiting in anguish the birth of her child. That is, the soul—figured always as a woman, (because of its virginity, or purity from mixture with material conditions), or the *productive power* of Love

and Wisdom in mankind, is ever seeking to bring forth the child of Truth. In deadly opposition to the "woman," or the soul, there appeared the "red dragon," with seven heads, or the perfect array of the physical against the spiritual; ten horns, or a large, and varied, and powerful establishment of earthly institutions, based on the physical plane, all of which were opposed to the "woman;" and on the heads were diadems, or the universal enthronement of the mere intellect, for the free-thinker is generally as bigoted as the priest. This dragon's tail, or reason, drew many "stars of heaven," or teachers and reformers towards the earth; and the "dragon" stood ready to devour the child which the "woman" was about to deliver. As soon as her son appeared, a man-child, or the true wisdom of the spirit, which is to govern the earth with justice which cannot be broken up, (a "rod of iron"), it was upheld by divine power. But the "woman" was concealed, and was compelled to retire into a "wilderness," a place where she was unrecognised by the world at large; but where she was nevertheless sustained among those who knew her real power. There, for a period, "twelve hundred and sixty days," — that is, during the whole of the old epoch of darkness, and for a certain time longer, — she existed, or was understood. The wise of all ages knew the strength of the Soul. She was the beginning and the end of all their studies, of all their secrets, of all their profound wisdom. Outcast, and unknown to the masses; she was "nourished," and fed, and developed, by the great seers. In the temples of antiquity, in which many a true esoteric religion lived, the woman-priestess officiated with the man-priest. Only a degenerate age has divorced the twain through ignorance that man and woman together represent the faculties of the soul, and that masculine religion alone soon becomes dead, and soulless, and devoid of all vitality in thought and action.

Many and various have been the speculations con-

cerning the sun-bright woman, and, like the "two witnesses," she has been selected as a prophecy of various churches, and various individuals. It should be again understood that the figure is an eternal principle, and therefore may, so far, be connected with *every* effort made in its behalf. That which brings forth most truth, which is capable of the most divine inspiration, and the highest condition, will most truly be symbolised by the "woman." It was true of Mary, who illustrated in concrete form the glory of divine motherhood; it is true of all those philosophic men who allowed inspiration and seership to illuminate their reason, and produce lasting wisdom; it is gloriously true of the efforts of woman to become free, and to bring forth her man-child of love into every organisation and institution of the world; and it will be true of every woman who understands the grandeur of "immaculate conception," and of the power to redeem in perfect maternity. With regard to this last and extremely difficult work, it is only wise to say that such truths can only be realised in their actual results, and that many women have been the victims of deceptive influences, the object of which has been to cover a truly noble work with ridicule and suspicion. If any human instruments are called to such redeeming efforts, it will be sufficient to say that the method of their attainment will be by the incarnation of the soul, which is dual, in *two* forms, of interiorly awakening the outer consciousness to the union, and through trials corresponding to the old initiations, of preserving the virginity of the women, and educating them to very pure conditions. For perfect virginity, and purity even from the magnetism of men, are an essential part of a work none can assume, and which will probably bear the significant sign and seal of its verity in crucifixion. Such dual incarnations of the developed, or immortal soul, are, so far, extremely rare, and large numbers of women have hailed redemption by external methods, or by the supposed complete marriage, who

had not learned that the preliminary and all-essential stage was to perfect the being within. Many stages or this work must be passed through and many generations elapse before a spiritualised form of man can be born. It is therefore wisest to hold up principles, and look for their ever-recurring illustrations in the increasing efforts of the divine in humanity to bring forth the Christ.

The position of this symbol in the progress of the opening of the seventh seal is nevertheless very significant as to the all-essential and rapidly increasing emancipation of womanhood itself, for until this is accomplished, the "dragon" will ever be ready to devour the beautiful "child."

The seer then saw "war in heaven," and "Michael and his angels" engaged in combat with the dragon, "which fought also with his angels, although they did not prevail, but were cast down to the earth."

The "war" spoken of is between the principles upheld by the angels of light, of which *Michael* was represented by the Kabalists as the chief, and all that was materialistic, and prevented spiritual growth in the visible and invisible worlds. The "devil," "Satan," the "dragon," the "serpent," all signify the darkness and deceptive condition of matter, which is believed by "the whole world" to be a reality, instead of an illusion, a changing, and disintegrating, and corruptible state, the perishable base of spiritual emanation. The true seer, the true spiritual man, pierces it with potent gaze, and ceases to live for the external, but lives for the pure, the immortal, and the incorruptible. Like the Nazarene, he says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where *moth and rust* doth consume, and where *thieves* break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

The light of the soul is the "lamp of the body," and if the "eye" be blind ("evil"), the "whole body is full of darkness," and if what should be the light is dark-

ened, we may with him truly exclaim, "How great is that darkness!"

A heavenly voice declared the triumph of the soul,—
 "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the divine kingdom, and the reign of the Christ;" and they who unceasingly despised her truth, and even in the name of religion, are cast down. The martyr-spirits and seers who obeyed her voice overcame the material by the life of the ever-sacrificed "Lamb," to whose righteousness they were witnesses, counting truth as more precious than life in the body. All that was angelic and purified rejoiced, but before the final victory of the spirit on earth, fierce conflicts were to take place which would cause trouble on "land and sea;" for all those "powers of darkness" who recognised that "the time was short" were filled with hostility, and inspired and influenced those on the earth to disbelieve the reality of the divine soul itself, whose child could not be slain. The "woman" was "persecuted," but "two wings of a great eagle" were given to her and she was once more sustained and shielded from the destructive power of matter. That is, the soul was borne aloft on the wings of angelic truth, which might for the time remain in unknown places, and in retirement, but would yet live. The flood cast forth by the "serpent" to carry her away is the false science which denies the existence and power of the soul, and the "earth," which aids "the woman," is the profound instinct latent in all ages and races, because the silent voice of matter itself declares that the soul exists, however misrepresented that reality may have been in the various forms of religions. The general consent of the people, was, and is, in favour of soul-existence, and the flood of agnosticism and positivism is ever swallowed up by the ignorant consciousness of the world. The "dragon" nevertheless was not slain, and soulless reason, wherever it was, declared war against spiritual things, and those who possessed the divine life, and understood "the testimony of Jesus."

Reason, therefore, standing on the "sand of the sea," or before a vast ocean which it could not cross or explore, conjured up many methods and still supported various systems which would overthrow the knowledge and power of the soul.

Those writers on the visions of John who have followed the purely historical and contemporaneous mode of interpretation, — utterly inadequate to account for those portions of the book which plainly show that the opening of the "seventh seal," to which it is chiefly devoted, means the long and varied struggles for the establishment, and the final triumph, of the Christ in humanity, — have ingeniously sought to prove that "the beast" signified Nero, who could not be otherwise or more plainly indicated in those days of terrible persecution. There is not a doubt that in John's mind Nero was the supreme embodiment of the "beast," and that, so far, the idea may have a certain amount of foundation in fact. But of what was Nero a perpetual type, and what was truly signified by these visions of the great struggle between the powers of light and darkness, "heaven" and "earth," the "woman" and the "dragon?" Simply, that the "beast" forms the purely animal tendencies of man, and that the truth, the justice, the immortality of man is in deadly conflict with his falsehood and selfishness, and corruption and blindness. The "beast of the sea," with ten diademed horns, and seven heads with names of blasphemy, was a fresh form of the opposition of the "dragon," which was very powerful, since the "dragon" could no longer prevail in the old form of oppression which had become recognised by so many. Its "ten horns" are its power in the ten principal European nations, professedly Christian, which, having long suffered from various wrongs and oppressions, sought to effect reform, or to spread knowledge, by violent and unspiritual methods, which are "blas-

phemies" against the Wisdom and Love of the Soul.
The blasphemies are :

Atheism.

The deification of Matter.

Anarchy.

The extremes of socialism.

License between the sexes.

Vivisection.

Religious ritualism.

These are the true children of the physical man, the reign of intellect. The leopard appearance, with the tearing claws of the bear, and the devouring mouth of the lion, show the "carnivorous" or destructive nature of these conditions in all countries. They spring up from the ambush of a thousand secret sources of discontent, they rend oppressive institutions, and they consume much that is good and possesses life. Yet for a period these beliefs are very popular, and all that is material ("the dragon") enthrones them, and gives them great authority. They excite, not conviction, but wonder and astonishment among mankind, who nevertheless all worship them in some form, if they reject the rest, thereby confirming its general power, which defies all attempts to kill this manifestation of "the beast." Each head, or growth, except one, is apparently justified by science, and one head has received a death-stroke, but is healed. This growth is the increasing ritualism of Protestant churches, and its justification in symbolic significations, that system which has caused the corruption and downfall of every religion on earth. For a lengthy time these conditions evolved by "the dragon" will possess authoritative voices, and will scorn and reject divine wisdom, and the sacred temple of the soul in man, and emanating from Europe, will prevail in some form or other, all over the world. The "saints," or the true seers, and those who recognised the true way of reform, would be often overcome, and none would be able to resist the power

of "the beast" but those who had arisen beyond and above the physical, into the immortal life of the "lamb." He who was able to understand, it was said, ("had an ear") would realise this, and it is needless to say that he who has *no* ear, will consider the voice of the spirit and the meaning of the vision, as follies. It is further written, and in this the key of the allegory is given,—“If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. *Here* is the patience and the faith of the saints.” In other words, if men loved such modes of belief, life, or redress of wrongs, they would only deprive themselves of true freedom, and be led into another kind of slavery; for to destroy, is to court destruction. It was the reverse of all this, the firm belief in the power and victory of the spiritual, which filled those who saw and deplored social, sexual, religious, and national wrongs, with “patience;” the patience which was true to the better way, and the nobler course.

After this, another earth-born form appeared, with two horns, which resembled those of the lamb, but with the voice, nevertheless, of “the dragon,” which exercised, also, for a time universal authority, and supported, entirely unsuspected, the old principles. It was that which appeared to possess the sign of “the lamb,” yet only taught another form of materialism. The “great signs,” and “fire from heaven,” and the “deceptive” character, and the “breath” given to the “first beast,” are all those false spiritual manifestations and inspirations which attract men only once more to the phenomenal, and give erroneous views of the soul, life after death, reforms, and support several of those “seven heads,” which were “blasphemous,” because in opposition to all that is divine. And this first stage will declare that it presents the all of truth, and that none can obtain it or give it, who do not recognise it in this form alone, and possess its special “name” on “the forehead,” and “right hand,” or understand and ac-

tively use it. Yet it is added, "here is wisdom : " notwithstanding these signs, and this lamb-like head, he who has understanding, or who knows the true pathway, will "count the number," and find it to be that of "a man ;" the imperfect figures of three sixes, and not the number of the angel. This stage has already been alluded to, as part of the opening of the "seventh seal," and will assume from time to time more than one form. Yet it is necessary that man should experimentally and practically realise the various laws, spiritual and physical, by which he is surrounded, and with regard to *all* reformations, it may be said that none can be lasting, none can attain the required height, none can truly lead into the realm of power and freedom, which rest in, and on, the external. True inspiration seizes on the soul of the past, and makes the Easter of every dead religion upon the earth ; it does not deny the existence of the Eternal One because primitive man heard "a god" in the thunder ; it does not reject the work of Jesus of Nazareth because the churches have degraded it ; it does not promise a heaven which the spirit makes no effort to reach ; it does not say, "believe what every spirit says ;" it exhorts and counsels man to "know himself," to become a true seer, to depend permanently on nothing that is ephemeral and phenomenal. It is for him to ascend, rather even than an angel to descend. It may be observed that these remarks apply only to those who, usefully and wisely, convinced of immortality, refuse to do the work which that truth demands of each human being, and draw around them the influences which deceive rather than those which labour for human development, and neglect to stimulate the growth which, to be enduring, must spring from within. They only apply to the *materialism* of the spiritual movement, which, on the other hand, has accomplished, and is accomplishing, valuable work. It is needless to say that the truth, and the true worker, can never receive the sign of imperfection, for Love and Wisdom rise above every self-seeking impulse or object.

Beyond and above all this, the seer beheld the "Lamb" on an eminence, the "mount Zion;" which is prominently seen, in its rightful place, where the true temple should stand, surrounded with pure and holy spirits, who belonged to the Christ-order, which has the "Father's name on the forehead," or has attained to soul perfection. A heavenly voice like "many waters" and "loud thunder," or the voice of truth was heard from this sphere; which was full of harmony, like the sound of music. That truth, known to the spirits and angelic orders of power, could only be understood by those purified from the material conditions of earth (who were "virgins"), and not united, or attracted to, aught that was physical. These were able to follow the love and wisdom of the Christ, wherever and however it was manifested, since they had been the ripe harvest of his spirit when embodied, and had uttered the truth of the spirit, and penetrated every false semblance of it, being "without blemish," or perfectly pure. From those in this sphere, inspirations of wisdom fall upon mortals.

The seer saw also, at this time, an "angel flying in mid-heaven," that is a great spiritual power manifesting itself abroad, with an "eternal gospel" for all humanity, and the utterance of the voice was, "Reverence the divine, and give glory to that which is highest of all; for the hour of the true judgment has come, and the Eternal One must be honoured, the source of life and light in heaven, and earth, and every religion." The eternal gospel is the knowledge of God in man, of that divinity within, which was seen in the Nazarene, and which is the obscured aim of all religious faiths, however degraded, and the common hope and final possession of the human race. Future events will make the "eternal gospel" visible.

A second angel followed, or another and necessary portion of the same knowledge was widely realised, whose utterance was, "Babylon the great, who has intoxicated all nations with the wrath of her fornication,

has fallen." Babylon, the synonym for the opposite of Jerusalem, the pagan and idolatrous city, represented those illusive forms and ideas of religion and life, which the light of truth would increasingly dissipate. They were not entirely swept away, but they had "fallen," and ceased to exercise the power which had existed of old. Union with the false, the merely external, is always spoken of as "fornication;" yet like wine, it intoxicates; and it is full of "wrath," or suffering, and can never lead to the peace and rest of the spiritual nature.

A third angel, or a third voice, loudly declared that "the worshipper of the beast should drink of the wrath of God, and be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb." That is, that it would be widely known that those who deified the external, would suffer through a divine law, and be compelled to pass through those purifying elements which are as an eternal fire, and in which there is no rest, their condition being in supreme contrast to that of the "lamb," and the angelic state. The patience of the "saints," or wise, consisted in this, that they had learned, and carried out as far as was possible, the divine laws, and the truth of the Christ-life. Of those who had been of such on earth, a true voice, the "voice of the Spirit," said that they were "blessed;" they had passed from their mortal forms "in the Lord," or united to the divine Soul; and they had thenceforth found rest, and the result of their earthly efforts lived in their immortal life. It was the reward of patience, sacrifice, unselfishness, love, wisdom, whose "works," or labours, ever live in the increased strength of the soul, which is the priceless pearl, and the heavenly treasure.

The seer then beheld a white cloud, or a number of pure and beautiful spirits, who were guided by one who was like the son of Man, the presiding, or Christ-spirit, crowned with "gold," and with "a sharp sickle" in his hand. An angel, or a power, came forth from the heavenly temple of true worship, which bade him reap,

since the hour had come, and the harvest of the earth was ripe; that is, that it was time to gather the wheat of all that had grown and ripened on the fields of earth. The Christ-spirit cast the sharp sickle on the earth of a righteous judgment, and an angel reaped. One who had "power over fire," or who knew how to consume the dross by true inspiration, directed the sickle of another angel, or angelic influence, to be thrown on the earth, and the vintage of the earthly vine to be gathered in. The "earthly vine," cast into the winepress of divine "wrath," or judgment, is the false religious life of all nations, everywhere found to be external, or sacrificing its soul rather than preserving the true life. "Blood" streamed from it; the vine was of earth, and had absorbed the life of man, and was not the "true vine." These different "angels" all signify marked and different phases of the growth and reception of truth on the planet, which ever resulted in the separation of the false from the true, of the formation of a true judgment concerning various religions, of the "wheat" which had been produced in all nations, and of the clearer perceptions which saw the aims and objects of planetary existence, combined with practical and widespread reforms. All these are part of the work of the opening of the seventh seal.

After this there came the final efforts for the purification of the world, which were conducted by "seven angels," or the perfect and harmonious power of the great and wise of the unseen spheres. They had "plagues," or projected powerful influences on mankind, which caused conflict and disturbance, and change, and fresh judgments; and the elimination, and birth, and reformatory work of great truths, are truly "plagues" to the large majority. Autocrats, capitalists, landed proprietors, church-goers, worldlings, do not love to hear the growing ideas of the royalty of the spirit, of human equality, of the sole way of attaining true riches, of the rights of the people, and of the fallibility of all

the churches. Yet these ideas have increased daily and hourly even in this century, which, as will be further explained, has witnessed the opening of the "last seal," the revelation of the mystery, and the seven plagues are the perfect purifications which must be undergone in the present and in the future, in all institutions and organisations on the earth, in order that the "wrath of God," or the period of judgment, and the weighing of all things may be completed, and prepare for the New Era indicated by the previous work.

There was a "glassy sea, mingled with fire," by which stood those who were victorious over the "beast," and could not be stamped with the sign of imperfection; and who had "the harps of gold," or were filled with, and produced, divine harmony. The glassy sea is the mirror of the soul, and its "fire," the undying inspirations of the Eternal One, which breathe over its calm and interior reflections. They sang the "song of Moses, the servant of God," and the song of the Lamb, declaring that "the works of God alone were righteous and true; that the eternal pathway was alone divine, and that the divine alone ruled throughout the ages, and that all nations should in the end worship that Holy One, and understand true righteousness, which was at last revealed."

What was the song of Moses, "the deliverer," and of the Lamb who was slain? Does not the first commence with (Deut. xxxii.) the divine announcement to Israel, — "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; because I will *publish the name of the Lord*. He is the Rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." To "publish the name of the Lord" is to reveal the most sacred of mysteries. And of the enemies of the true Israel it is said, "Their rock is not as our rock; their grapes are grapes of gall; their wine is the poison of dragons." The song announced the way of deliver-

ance; that which was true and eternal, — a “rock”; the life of the Eternal Spirit; the true vine. It is the song of victory of Exodus xv. in a higher key. That is to say, all these lived a life in harmony with the highest law.

And the song of the Lamb is the voice of Love and Wisdom, ever ready to be uttered through sacrifice, ever faithful, and ever victorious.

Then came forth the “angels” from the heavenly temple where truth (“the testimony”) prevailed, gloriously arrayed and bright, with the final “plagues,” which they threw on the earth from “golden bowls” received from one of the “living creatures,” or by the power of that spiritual life in the material which is the silent response to, and also the medium of, the guiding powers in behalf of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and through which they could at this time directly influence, or even communicate with, a certain class of men and women. The bowls containing the “plagues of judgment” were of gold, or pure in nature, and until the work had been fully completed, the sight of the heavenly temple was eclipsed by the emanations of the intense and fiery light within; nor were any able to enter into it. Truth dazzles and eclipses itself, at first, but becomes recognised at last by the purified and interior vision, which sees rightly, accepts, and welcomes. From the temple proceeded a voice which decreed that the final “judgments” should be accomplished. They were the outbursts, the culminations of various long smouldering wrongs and errors, which, like the lightning-storms, resulted in purifying the earthly sphere.

The first plague was that which plainly *demonstrated*, as it had never been before, that materialism of human *life*, (“the men”), was corrupt.

The second was that which plainly showed in like manner that materialism of thought (the “sea,” or trackless ocean), was full of death, and that nothing could live formulated by false science.

The third demonstrated also in the same way that the sources of religious life, the various churches, ("rivers, and fountains of waters"), were also full of death. The angel of "the waters," or the *spiritual* sources, the original wisdom of all religions, responded that the judgment was "righteous," and proceeded from unchanging law and truth; and that the prophets and wise had long been killed and rejected by these religious institutions, and therefore that death was their own portion. To this "the altar" responded, or the symbol of long sacrifice, that the "judgment" was true.

The fourth also plainly showed that the "sun," sometimes typical of a church, sometimes of all that was supposed to be light in education, the state, and social life, burnt and consumed, rather than aided in the growth of human development. Its reign was recognised as "a plague;" but men speculated as to whether life was really worth living, rebelled against the pathway of purification and suffering appointed for the immortal soul, and did not as yet "give glory" to, or acknowledge, its majestic and ever-enduring power.

The fifth, unmistakably showed that the "throne of the beast," the mere intellect, the mere conclusions of the physical senses, were wrong and erroneous; and his "kingdom," the kingdom of mere reason, and of the external, was everywhere darkened, or began to decline. This occasioned much conflict and strife, owing to the discovery of the uselessness and corruption, "pains and sores," of a variety of popular beliefs and institutions, which many upheld from personal or sectarian interests in the teeth of the consciousness of greater and grander truths, thereby blaspheming the divine, or sinning against their own souls, and refusing to accept better and higher modes of teaching and existence. Schools of medicine, of philosophies, of literature were found to be based on erroneous conceptions of the being of man, and the rapidly increasing knowledge of his nature overthrew many cherished conclusions through which the wealth, reputation, and

honours of various professors and scholars had been obtained. The truth in all directions was hotly contested, and the supporters of old theories, notwithstanding secret convictions that they had possibly been wrong, would not allow the voice of the spirit within them to be heard: the sacrifice would be too great, the humiliation too deep; and they exchanged the eternal and divine for the sake of the world.

The present period may be taken as an entrance into all these varied stages of the unfoldment of man, and we are now in the midst of a great and world-wide conflict of thought mainly turning upon questions as to the nature, the whence and whither, of human life, which are affecting everything, weighing everything, and changing everything which had been based on mere theory, as opposed to science, in its broadest aspect.

The sixth "plague" is concerned with the immediate future, and from this time the prophetic visions of the seer may be looked upon as wholly connected with that which is yet to be fulfilled. The water of the "great river Euphrates was dried up, in order that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sun-rising." In the ancient vision of Eden, or Paradise, recorded in the second chapter of Genesis, already described as being Egyptian in its origin, (and known also among the ancient Assyrians), the four rivers signify the fourfold nature of man; the first only, the "*beginning*," is spoken of as proceeding from the land "where there is gold;" and of this it is said, "the gold of that land is good: *there* is bdellium and the onyx stone." This means the purified, immortal, and divine soul of man, which is a part of God, and all-powerful. It is "pure gold," and belongs entirely to the spiritual sphere, in which dwells what is enduring and precious. Of the fourth river nothing is said but this, "The fourth river is Euphrates." To interpret Euphrates as the divine soul is to state that the physical was everywhere at the culmination of its reign. But this had already taken

place, and a further stage had been reached. It therefore signifies the physical body, which begins to become more spiritualised, in order that a higher race should be born, and that the way might be prepared for the incarnation of those whose spiritual ripeness renders them true kings, the heralds of the great dawn, of the *Osiris*, or immortal order, of the "wise men from the East." That the astral body of man will be at some future period sufficiently dense and strong to protect his spirit, will be known as a fact, and effect the scientific destruction of death, or the gradual elimination of all that is liable to disintegration from the outer form. The physical body will cease to be formed by woman, through a higher law of marriage and organisation, in which the spiritual elements of parentage will alone be employed. This is a profound truth, and grand secret, the direct pathway to the Christ-reign, but one which cannot be understood, or assured, or proclaimed with anything like safety, until seership is far more perfect than it is at present, and the capacity to distinguish the true from the false complete and clear.

None can pass through this doorway who have not become purified instruments, and linked to the divine, through their victories in the trials of initiation, every step of which, during these first efforts, must be fraught with danger. The glory of this work can only be known by its results, for the instruments thereof will be appointed to taste of all that will remove from their spirits selfishness, ambition, love of power, the desires of the senses, and things of earth, until they become as "little children," purified and tender in their physical bodies, innocent in their natures, in their faith, and in their love. The result of this direct operation of the soul in parentage, and its effect in the great future of the world, will be considered in a concluding chapter. There is a bar in the great symbolic Pyramid which prevents entrance into the King's Chamber, to the physical man. One of the stature of a child can pass under it with ease,

and a spirit can pass through it. The undefiled, unworldly condition of childhood inspired the Nazarene to declare that "of such was the kingdom of heaven."

The signs of the actual commencement of this work will call forth strenuous spiritual opposition, or the spirits of the earth-sphere, large masses of which are, and for a period, will be at work, not for the benefit of humanity at large, regardless of creed, race, or colour, but for some institution, or sect, or principles, to which they are and have been attached, and which this truth is destined to overthrow. It is one of the last efforts of the "dragon," that which is pledged to the external, and ever "prophesies falsely; and the three spirits which are not pure that it sends forth, are in some form or other, deception, ignorance, and persecution. They deceive, as it has already been stated, by appearing as "angels of light," personating the wise and great of old, and by simulating purer spirits, and teaching and using occult science to the extent that is possible to them, (for the perfect science can only be known to the perfect), for concealed aims and objects; they acquire power through the blindness of the mortals over whom they rule, and they persecute by inflaming numbers of human beings to hate, wrong, betray, and in some way or other condemn, those who are alike innocent and defenceless who obey the law of the spirit. The dual soul, divided only by form during incarnation, for it cannot be separated in a higher sphere, does not require legal sanction for its union, or the endorsement of a church. As well might man seek to marry God, or to deny His existence outside a religious institution. But in the eyes of the bigot, be he mortal or spirit, truth is divine when linked to a name, and false when it is uttered for, or lives in, the common interests of humanity. It is most essential to direct attention to this at the present time, since there are souls now being incarnated, and about to be incarnated, who will require after a space, the spirit of love around them to keep them alive. Let those who possess merely earthly authority pause

and consider, lest they may, like Pilate and Caiaphas of old, "know not what they do."

These spiritual influences will ever work in behalf of the outer, giving "signs," and directing attention to the phenomenal, which is opposed to the spirit of the Christ. Jesus of Nazareth indeed gave many glorious proofs of spiritual power, but he condemned those who came to him for the "signs," and said, "you seek me, not because of the truths of the soul, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled," and "*No* sign shall be given." The truth is more than the manifestation, the spirit more than the form, the heaven within grander than the pleasant places without. These invisible spiritual workers would seek out the great and powerful of the world, the rulers who ruled by the power of the outer, in order that their sympathies should be enlisted in behalf of the external rather than the eternal, and that human influence should be arrayed against the divine order. It will be a final "war," the old conflict in a new guise, and therefore of the "great day of God," or of that which belongs to the all-powerful and enduring.

Nor do the cities of the earth, with their haunts of vice, and innumerable drinking-saloons, and greed of gold, fail to send forth their tens of thousands of impure spirits, who return to haunt, and obsess, and mislead those in the form, and among them those in positions of authority and trust.

In a paragraph given as an insertion, it is stated, as though a voice had been heard by the seer,— "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked;" or, in other words, that this method of opposition would be overthrown when least expected, and that those would be happy who "watched," or who realised the true character of the strife, and would be thus preserved from the exposure of its nature, which would surely follow.

The conflict occurred "in the place called *Har-Magedon*;" or, in the unseen world, and through unseen

forces, in which the love of dominion (which the word signifies) would be opposed to the power of truth.

The seventh influence which caused a "plague," was accompanied by a heavenly voice, proceeding from "the temple," and from the "throne," or all that was held wise and sacred in the sphere of angelic life, uttering for the first time the strange and significant words, "*It is done!*" The work would be notwithstanding accomplished; the light born; the foundations of the future of human progress laid; and there were inspirations, and utterances of truth, and far-spreading reverberations of it, and an "earthquake" greater than had ever occurred before, or facts patent to all, which would have power to move the entire planet. The "city of Babylon," or the stronghold of all that belonged to the senses, was divided, or no longer in harmony with itself, and the "cities of the nations," or everything erected by merely human wisdom, "fell," or lost the old dominion. The whole face of the earth underwent spiritual change; and the "old islands," and "mountains" disappeared. The positive and decisive forms that truth began to assume, the "great hail from heaven," were as a plague to large numbers of persons, who could no longer overthrow, or resist, but who nevertheless refused to listen to the voice of the spirit.

The seer was then invited to witness the "judgment of the great harlot." Many have been the dissertations upon the "scarlet woman," as she is called, and theologians have fixed upon special churches as the true interpretation of the symbolic figure. Others have referred it to the fall of Rome, when sacked by the Goths in the time of Alaric. If the latter be correct, it seems strange that Jerusalem, which was the scene of a far bloodier siege, and which witnessed the martyrdom of the Nazarene himself, should not also have been signified. Jerusalem was more guilty than Rome, because more enlightened by prophecy, and a natural love of the religious life. And at a period when the Roman church

possesses much that is quite as valuable for minds in a certain stage of growth as other religious institutions, all liberal minds must refrain from selecting her, out of all the various organisations which have been founded with the honest intention of benefiting those who belonged to them. What, then, is the "harlot?" By way of reply it may be asked, "what is the great characteristic of a harlot?" A woman who suffers her being to be degraded for the object of gain; who will *sell* herself to sense; give up the truth for the sake of worldly advantages; exchange the interior for the material.

Since the virgin soul of mankind is symbolised by a sun-bright woman, the harlot must certainly be understood to represent the soul engulfed in matter; the physical marriage of man and woman; the union of church and state; the corruption of the spiritual, and these conditions have existed throughout an immense period. The power of sense has intoxicated all earthly rulers; it has ruled over the very fountains of life, and yet it is in a "wilderness," something which is, itself, not public or openly manifested, but existing everywhere in secret, or seen in its operations and results. This false "woman" is enthroned upon a "scarlet beast," or that which belongs to the life (or blood) of the animal, and which is full of "names of blasphemy," or rebellions against all that is holy and consecrated to divine ends, "possessing seven heads, and ten horns," or intellectual capacity and power in every department of life, parental, sexual, social, industrial, ecclesiastical, literary, artistic, scientific, educational, and reformatory, and yet she is honoured; arrayed in purple, and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones, and drinking from a "golden cup," a contaminated fluid, or sustaining herself by the worship of Mammon, and the result of the price paid in exchange for virtue and righteousness.

On her forehead was written the word "*Mystery*, Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth;" or the unseen and mys-

terious source of every corruption, wrong, and evil condition, especially in the relations between man and woman, in the honoured legal marriage of social life as it has existed, and does exist. "She had become drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus." This verse has been largely quoted as pointing to the false system of ecclesiasticism which became enthroned in the name of Christianity, and through the power of which millions of innocent lives were sacrificed. But what produced that system? The material condition of men. The church of the middle ages simply reflected the minds of the mass of the people, as, with precisely the same creeds, it reflects their minds at the present time. The butcheries and imprisonments of the Inquisition, the persecution of Protestants by Catholics, and Catholics by Protestants, of Nonconformists by Episcopalians, of Quakers by Puritans, of Unitarians by Trinitarians, were all part of one and the same mental and moral condition, and can scarcely be charged to any particular sect with justice, even although that special church or sect may have initiated the evil of persecution, and carried it to its worst extremes. Calvin at Geneva, with his belief in a fiery hell, and his hatred of Servetus, was the true brother of Dominic; and the Scotch presbytery of the Puritan age was as inflexible and bigoted as any council of Rome. Not for an hour could martyrdom have been inflicted by the condemnation of the church, and the executive decrees of the state, had it not been supported by the general consent of the people. They themselves crowded the market-places and squares where human bonfires sent up their smoke to eclipse and make sad the very heavens themselves, — not to pity, not to protest, not to prevent by loud voices and strong arms, but to look on, to approve, and sometimes even to curse. The mistakes of the Fathers in their voluminous, and constantly deteriorating writings, bore bitter fruit, far and wide. The exaltation of celibacy, for instance, became so involved with the idea of purity, that from

being at one time optional, it was at last forced upon the priesthood by the laity, and speedily became an inviolable rule. And there are Protestant clergymen and ministers at this hour who dare not teach aught that is above the comprehension of their congregations, or that is truly liberal and spiritual, because there are popes and inquisitors in the pews who would not receive or suffer it, and who would send them forth to poverty and disgrace.

In some of its beliefs, indeed, the Roman church has been widely recognised as nearer the truth than the reformed one; its belief in purgatory, or that there is progress and purification in the unseen life; in patron saints, or the protective power of spirits and angels; in "miracles," or manifestations of the spiritual world in every century; in relics, and "blessed" scapulars, and candles, or the psychological potency of articles connected with persons possessing strong magnetic aura, are all based upon truth. Music is useful in religious meetings, or communion with a purer sphere than ours; so, at times, is incense; so are flowers, and all these things are parts of long-forgotten principles embodied in worship so ancient that it antedates the temple-system of the Jews, and can be traced to the old Egyptians, and the Buddhists, whose priesthood bears a significant resemblance to that of Rome. In some of their beliefs, the majority of the Protestant sects have been wrong; and their non-ritualistic services quite as material as those which they condemned; yet the principle of liberty in "private judgment," however faulty, has been vindicated, and leads towards that "liberty of the spirit" which must eventually unite all religions on a higher plane, in which the very nature of woman as the "interpreter" of the exoteric, will make her a priestess, and prepare the way for the erection of that final temple of manhood which ceases altogether to deal with external places of worship.

Those Protestants, however, who in their recognition

of the fact that the Roman church has retained certain beliefs founded on reality, join her communion, are only re-treading the old and treacherous pathway which leads away from the establishment of the divine order on earth ; and from which Protestantism was a huge effort to free itself. For there are three fatal elements in the church of Rome ; the principle that any single human being can be the sole mouth-piece of heaven, in council, or otherwise, utter final truths, and issue final decisions for the spiritual guidance of mankind, as in the case of the Pope and the Œcumenical council ; the order of the Jesuits, who have possessed some knowledge of occult science, and who have adopted, and still adopt every method that ingenuity can devise for placing Catholics in positions of power and influence, and thereby exercising control over political, reformatory, and social movements in the interests of the church ; and the exclusion of woman from her councils, altars and pulpits. What *woman*, with soul on fire for liberty can submit to a church in which her voice is never heard ?

The only possible way in which the danger of the secret persecution of reformers who refuse to make their submission to her communion can be avoided, is by resolutely maintaining the assertion of human equality, and freedom which recognises the rights and uses of each individual soul, and acquiesces in no further assumption of the mediatorial offices of the few. Reformation, redemption, truth, belong not to a church, but to all humanity ; they are designed not for the glory of sects or individuals, but for the illumination of every man and woman, no matter of what race or creed, who can receive the light, and for the future benefit of all nations and all faiths. The light-bearers of the great future will be the last to desire authority, even needless recognition. It is enough for every faithful soul to work for God.

What, then, to return from an essential digression is the meaning of the passage quoted ? The real and unceasing *cause*, not only of the hapless blood shed in the

interests of so-called religion in Europe, but of the "martyrs" of Jesus; the seers and reformers of all time, is the blindness and corruption of man physically born, undeveloped in his spiritual nature, external in his religion and his science, and who hates, persecutes, and kills the "Christ-spirit," and all who most fully represent it. The material man loses the use of the full measure of his faculties, becomes "drunk" with the perpetual suppression of the powers and perceptions of his soul. This condition kills "the Christ" everywhere, not only in the prison and at the stake, but in the very church, and at the altar thereof. The blood of the true, the life of the truth, is everywhere sacrificed and slain.

The angel-voice proceeded to explain the mystery, and in the explanation this fact is fully shown, and it must be remembered that we are gazing upon a future period, which is not yet unfolded. "The beast *was*;" that is, it *had* reigned; "and *is* not," in other words, the source of evil and imperfection was unveiled, and the death-blow had, therefore, to a large extent, been struck; "and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition;" or is about to be fully revealed in its full degradation to the world, and to cease to exist.

This, it was said, would create wonder on the part of those who had not recognised it, as some always had throughout the ages, and the wise would understand the meaning of the vision. The heads had been mountains, or the perfect exaltation of the physical in everything which had power among the nations of the earth; ruling as kings; yet five of those "kings" had fallen; one lived; and one was to manifest itself yet more powerfully, and would live for a time. The power of the physical, almost demolished, is also "an eighth," and "is of the seven;" that is, supported by unseen as well as visible authority; and has produced its full results everywhere, while the "ten horns" or kings already enumerated "have as yet no kingdom;" that is,

are unable to exercise direct rule ; but " receive authority as kings with the beast for an hour," or, in other words, are accepted and honoured as wise and good for a very short remaining period. The five fallen kings may be interpreted as the rule of the five senses ; and the exact and precise meaning of the one which lived, and the one which was to arise can be fully made known only in the future ; for it is impossible to foresee and describe all the forms which opposition to truth will assume.

These, with one accord, endorse the external, and " war against the Lamb," or reject the love and wisdom which point to higher and nobler states. The " lamb " would overcome them, since it is eternal truth which ever prevails ; and those who followed its voice, would also overcome, who are " called," (awakened to it) ; " chosen," (selected as instruments to divine ends) ; and " faithful," (unswerving in devotion to the highest truth).

The " waters " on which the " seductive woman " sat, were all the races of men on the entire planet. At last the " ten horns " would rebel against her, and would expose and consume her power, since although they had been permitted to yield to the reign of falsehood, and to work in the interests of the physical nature alone, the time would come when the " words of God," or divine truth, and the universal prophecy of nature, would be realised.

The " woman " was the " great city," the Rome, the Babylon, the dragon, the imperial rule of matter, whose " kingdom " or authority, and whose various oppositions to the Christ-principles, and the soul, have already been portrayed. Nero, and the Christian martyrs, and the seven hills of the imperial city, represent principles which are of universal application ; and which render these visions of the seer of profound interest and import, especially in a part of the work of human redemption in which woman would exercise a great influence.

An angelic being who had "great authority" was seen descending from heaven, who illuminated the world. Since this angel "descended," it seems to foretell the incarnation of some great souls, who would be able to publicly demonstrate the grandeur of a purer social order, and a higher and more spiritual race. They had the capacity to show that "Babylon was fallen," or to overthrow the power of materialism in religion, science, the state, and social relations, and to reveal that it was really a "habitation of devils," or a stronghold of the powers of darkness which had undermined the strength of all nations, and had seduced all that had been influential, and apparently rich, into its methods.

A heavenly voice cried aloud to the people, or the universal voice of inspired truth, uttered and demonstrated by spirits and mortals, "Come forth, — have no fellowship with her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and her iniquities produce divine retribution." The evils of earth were fully known, and their sources; and men were bidden to live in accordance with higher laws, which are alone capable of redeeming from universal wrongs and sufferings. Their transgression multiplied evil; subjection to false systems produced an increased measure of it. The "contaminated cup" became twice mixed with the life-blood of what was great and good. Far-spread had been the power of the "false woman," long had continued her belief that she was queen of the world, and "no widow;" but she was nevertheless divorced from the true, and in "one day," or very rapidly would her "plagues" come; death, and famine, and burning with fire; or the extinction of the innermost sources of evil on the earth, which would cease to be fed or sustained, and become consumed. This would be recognised by every institution in all nations, which would know that the "hour of judgment" had come. Those who had traded and lived by material wealth and false religions, found them all worthless be-

fore the actual illustrations of a true order of human life. The latter destroyed the old "fruits," and the old "merchandise," and they were seen and known to be nothing in comparison with the priceless powers of the soul. The truth caused many to suffer who had lived for the outer rather than the inner, but heaven, and the "saints," and the "apostles," and the "prophets," or the wise of all ages, beheld in this the fulfilment of their predictions, and the victory of their spiritual wisdom. "God judged their judgment on her."

A spiritual power so strong that it took up and cast down a mill-stone as the type of the heavy fall and the final sinking of the old errors, showed that the reign of "Babylon" was over. It ceased to give joy (music); it ceased to be dependent on "craftsmen," on mechanical contrivances, — railways, steamers, and external vehicles, — for the spiritual man went where he would; it ceased to give light; it ceased to be the stronghold of legal marriage; it ceased to yield wealth; and it was shown to be a "sorcery" which had deceived all nations. And in that old material condition were found the age-long wrongs of the wise, the rejection of the good and of everything divine which had been "slain upon the earth."

The mill-stone is a fine symbol also of that eternal "mill of God" which "*grinds slowly, yet grinds all.*" And the purely physical processes had accomplished their work and were cast down.

The inhabitants of heaven, or those spiritual beings who had so long been at work for human welfare, and who dwell in the spheres of light, rejoiced over the commencement of the reign of the spiritual, and of a mightier race of men on the earth, and declared that true "salvation, and glory, and power belong to the divine; that this alone recognises what is wise and right"; and that the harlot of matter, to which the spirit of man had so long been united, and which had cor-

rupted the world, had been rightly recognised as the origin of all evil.

And the smoke of its burning, or its consumption by the fire of the spirit, goes on throughout the ages. The angelic order under whose guidance the planet had progressed, and the soul-emanations of nature "worshipped God" or exalted anew the truths of the Eternal Soul; and from its sanctuary a voice declared that the eternal, and true, and divine should alone be revered by all men. And from all nations, and all forms of religion, and all sources of life and light there came a mighty reverberation of praise, or an exaltation of the One who alone reigned. There was joy and gladness because the "marriage of the Lamb had come," or the union of man with his divine soul of Love and Wisdom, and "the wife had made herself ready," or the body had become in large numbers of persons completely spiritualised. She was "arrayed in fine linen, bright and pure; and the fine linen signified the righteous acts of the saints"; that is, the outer form had grown into a pure and spiritual condition, owing to its former struggles for truth and righteousness; and it was said that those were blessed who were bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb, or had attained to this condition.

The angel who was showing these visions to the seer then said, "These are true words of God," or "these are divine truths;" and the seer, looking upon this angelic being, who must have belonged to a planetary order, fell down in human and Oriental fashion, to "worship him." This was at once forbidden, as an enduring rebuke to those who fall at the feet of any spirits, however noble, pure, and great, and forget to develop their own innermost being. It is what the Nazarene, in the sorest stress and need of his martyr-life, and who constantly communicated with, and was strengthened by, beautiful and angelic souls, never did. The spirit replied, "*See thou do it not.* I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of

Jesus"; or, "I am also a living soul, as thou art, and thy brothers are, in the cause of immortality"; "*worship God*"; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"; or, in other words, "exalt the divine, the Soul of all; for the work of the Christ is the prophecy of universal nature." The "spirit of prophecy," the Osiris, the undying truth, the immortality and perfection of man, the effort and the heir of all the ages, in whose *being* is contained the mystery and the revelation of the seventh seal.

The "heaven opened," or there came perfect intercommunion between man and the spiritual world; the time of deception in the physical and spiritual had passed; it was safe, pleasant, and profitable for all who were pure, — and of these there were large numbers.

The "white horse" of strength and purity appeared, and enthroned upon it was all that was "Faithful and True," which judged aright of all things and fought against all evil. The piercing eye of the spirit, the crowns of authority, and the name written, which none knew but the one who possessed it, prophesy of the growing *adeptship* of man, guided by heavenly wisdom. It had been the result of the price of "the garment sprinkled with blood," or many trials. But the name of this force was "The Word of God," — the Power of the Divine Spirit, the victory of the Nazarene. A host, also, of strong and pure spirits inaugurated this union of heaven with earth, of the spiritual world with man, who had learnt to overcome matter, and had penetrated its secret; and from this great force went forth a "sharp sword to smite the nations," to fill them with this truth, and to rule with a rod of iron, or a just rule which could not be broken, and which trod upon the eternal wine-press of physical nature, and expressed or eliminated the life and the spirit from all its forms. That majestic power was above and beyond all, the royalty of true Manhood, the rule of the Christ-spirit; it was "king of kings, and lord of lords."

The adept-race was seen in a thousand centres of the

earth. Its dominion was felt, and its mighty coöperation with the world of spirit. Man *knew* his immortality; he knew the existence of the invisible world, which was daily growing into the visible, and admitting him into its spheres of beauty, to visit and enjoy at his will. But the searching character of this knowledge, the mighty strength of the spiritual race to redress wrongs, and curb evil, called forth that rebellion from the weaker, and the less pure, and the more selfish, which created the last conflict; one, however, which will necessarily be of short duration.

The final remains of materialism in all that regulated human affairs, "the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies," arose against the powers of the soul. But it was "taken," together with the "false prophet," or that which declared that the redemption of man could be assured by physical science, with its varied branches of knowledge and its remarkable discoveries and inventions, which had led so many to relinquish all belief in aught beyond the human intellect.

False religion with its "signs" had been overthrown; and false science followed. Reason was seen to be less glorious than the faculties and vision of the soul, and its deductions and prophecies, ("the false prophet"), ceased to be blindly followed. The twain were cast into the "lake of fire that burneth with brimstone," or were consigned to the purifying elements which consume the dross and errors of matter; and "the rest," all the errors which had been derived from these sources, were slain by the pure truth, "the Faithful and True;" and "all the birds of the air were filled with their flesh;" that is, the elementary spirits who are able to communicate with those who are earthly, had been attracted to and sustained only by the physical, and it was found that they had been nourished on, and had upheld, outer forms. The period of spiritual deceptions was over.

After this an angel descended from heaven, or a series of reincarnations of pure spirits took place, who

had the "key of the abyss," or the secret of the world within and without, and a "great chain," and the power to bind the physical, or to make it altogether powerless and subservient to the spirit. The "old serpent," the "devil," or "Satan," of matter was visibly bound, and cast into the "abyss," or thrown off as an elementary condition from the spiritualised race of men. It was "shut" and "sealed," or firmly held and governed by the life of the spirit, and was incapable of further deluding the world until a "thousand years" should be completed, after which it would be "loosed" for a period. That is to say, that after a vast number of superior spirits had been incarnated in perfected organisations, inferior ones, for wise purposes, would be permitted to approach the earth, and become embodied by less careful obedience to the laws which govern birth, life, and organised forms. Cycles rise and fall, ascend and descend, but each carries on the supreme objects of the planet a whole stage further. During the culmination of this great cycle, heavenly order ruled, and with "true judgment," and the martyr-spirits of the ages, those who had been "beheaded," or deprived of life on earth for the sake of the divine truths of the Christ-work, and who had vanquished all that was material in their natures, "reigned with Christ," or appeared in visible form on the earth as the master-spirits, pledged to the triumph of truth, righteousness, and the immortality of the Nazarene, which does not see the corruption of the flesh, having attained a purity of being which is proof against disintegration. They had won the strength to permanently found the spiritual order of manhood on the planet, while the "rest of the dead," or the numbers of beings who had lived and died on earth, and had not won this condition, had yet to await this final attainment of interior strength. This was the "first resurrection," the first great and glorious revelations of manhood in the Christ-order, and those were not only "blessed," but "holy," who were thus incarnated; having not only no further need of incarnation, and

having perfected union with the Divine Soul, but wholly escaping the old physical crisis of death; and being "priests of God and of Christ," or priests of the eternal order of the temple of humanity, in which dwell the Christ-principles of love, wisdom, and immortality. For a cycle, a "thousand years," these grand embodiments of truth reigned.

Then came a brief period of descent, in which the material again asserted itself in every nation, in a form so specious that it deceived numbers. "Gog and Magog" represented those who attempted to invade the true Israel, those who still clung to external buildings and forms of worship, and to whom, as in the past, truth appeared as a heresy, and the world was more than the soul. This was caused by an influx of inferior spirits sent on earth for their own development.

The "camp of the saints," and the "beloved city" were assailed, but the fire of heavenly truth destroyed these efforts, and the "devil," or "old serpent" of matter was cast forever into the elements of purification.

After this the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth fully commenced. The sun-like face of Eternal Truth, enthroned, moved alike the spiritual and visible world, until both were changed, and so interlinked, that of their former conditions it might truly be said "there was found no place for them." "The dead, great and small," stood "before the throne, and books were opened;" that is, the lives of spirits embodied through the ages were seen in the light of eternal truth and eternal justice, and the "books" of these lives were visible to all, and could be read by all; the immortal memory of each was awakened. There was also "another book opened, the book of life;" or the order of a living instead of a dying humanity; and "the dead," or those spirits who had been long embodied, were "judged," or received the reward of their "works;" thoughts, desires, actions; and held the results of their long struggle with the physical. "The sea gave up the dead;" the great ocean of plan-

etary life yielded up the spirits ; "death and Hades gave up the dead," or the power of death, and of suffering, in and out of the form, yielded to the power of the spirit, and all souls received the results of their age-long conflict.

Then "death and Hades," or the physical crisis of mortal existence, the corruptible body, and its disintegration, and the suffering arising therefrom, were finally "cast into the lake of fire," or returned to, and were destroyed in, the elements of purification. If any spirit was found *soulless*, it was necessarily consigned to the renewed action of those elements, which were the "second death," or a second age-long conflict with the physical in some world, the condition of which would attract such spiritual beings, the prospect of which is too vast and prolonged for us to contemplate. Just as the higher immortality, or the "second resurrection" can be won by the soul ; so also, may the "second death," or a second series of age-long re-births also be its portion, if it fails to achieve the object of its connection with physical life, at the close of the material stages of being in the planet. This was a part of the Hermetic philosophy, and based on the knowledge of spiritual evolution. It was known to Jesus, who said, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Absolutely, no soul can be lost ; practically, such a condition is a loss of its power, a losing of itself in gulfs and abysses of matter, which the mind, recognising the vastness of laws which operate "without haste, without rest," refuses to dwell upon. It need hardly be said that the "*first* resurrection," is the attainment of eternal life, or a lasting capacity to live in the spiritual sphere.

Grave is the responsibility of those false teachers of popular religions who mislead the people by solemn, and psychologically exercised exhortations, in which they declare that the "vicarious atonement" of one can redeem and purify the spiritual nature of another. The time is surely ripe for men to know that the victory of

the Nazarene was won by obedience to law, and that as man conforms to or rebels against the law of the Christ in himself, so will be the result in each step of his progress.

Then was inaugurated that perfect consummation of planetary life, which the seer beheld as "the new heaven and the new earth;" the "old heaven" which was veiled from man had passed away, as well as the "first earth," which was divorced from it owing to the imperfection of man. "The sea was no more;" the troubled ocean of life which came and went; of incarnations, and re-births, and deaths, ceased to exist; and the living dwelt in the world. The seer saw the "holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband;" or the perfection of spiritual existence in the spheres of light and truth above, unfolded on earth; the divine soul united at last to man, making him immortal, a perfect seer, a ruler over the earth by his knowledge of spiritual science, and the exercise of his pure will. A voice from the central source of Eternal Truth, and Eternal Justice declared, "the tabernacle of God was with men," the divine temple of manhood had been reared, making God one with man, and the divine his sole light; which would destroy all tears, and sufferings, and pain, and even death itself; for the "first things," the first order of humanity had passed away. And Truth and Justice showed that they "had made all things new," or had given them new life. And a voice from thence smote on the ears of the seer, and bade him record the vision; for the words were those of Truth; they "had come to pass," they already existed in the eternal end and object of life; they could not fail.

"I, THE SOUL, am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; the hidden source, and the glorious goal. I give unto the thirsty the never-failing fountain of the water of life freely. He who is of the soul shall inherit these powers, and I will be his God.

and he shall be my offspring. But all things, and all men, who are of the material, and whose forces are degraded, and who are divorced from the soul, shall return to the old elements, and again taste of the corruptible."

One of the angelic beings who had inspired, and revealed, and aided in the work of the opening of the seventh seal, and had given the vision to the seer, then called him to accompany him, and to look upon "the bride, the wife of the Lamb," or the result of the union of humanity with the divine love and wisdom. The seer beheld a purified earth, — the kingdom of heaven descending upon it and evolved from it, which had surpassing glory, and was full of light, and crystalline, or of purified substance in the external. The "city," or kingdom, had twelve gates and twelve angels, or universal perfection in every avenue of entrance to it, and their universal connection with angelic manhood, the purified race, the twelve long-scattered united tribes of the true Israel, extending to the four points of the compass, or all over the world. The kingdom was founded on perfect foundations of knowledge, and on its walls (or in its strongholds) were the "names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb," or the recognition of the perfect powers of Love and Wisdom.

The angel measured the city with a golden reed, and the avenues of access to it, and the strongholds which guarded it, and it was found that the city was "four-square," or just and perfect, and that "the length, breadth, and height were equal." The "golden reed" is the measure of pure truth, which showed that the kingdom, or city, was based on universal and eternal principles, and that its "*height*" (equal to its length and breadth) proved that it was of heaven. Its strong wall was according to the measure of "a man who was an angel," or angelic manhood, the Christ. One hundred and forty-four is the reverse of the three sixes, and signifies twelve multiplied by twelve, or perfection in

all things, and its ultimatum. The wall was like jasper, of shining white, or stainless purity, and the city was of pure and transparent gold, or of value and worth which all could discern; and the foundations of its wall—the sources of its strength—were beautiful with “all manner of precious stones,” or the purification of every element of life and organisation. Precious stones are some of the purest forms of matter; the rare productions of the unseen chemical, and electric, and magnetic forces of the hidden rocks; the crystallisation of unseen agencies; the fruit and blossoms, as it were, of the mineral world. From the most ancient times they were recognised as possessing certain potencies and virtues; the crystal stimulated seership; the diamond, purity; the amethyst, faithful love.

Therefore, the vision of the precious foundations was a vision of the extreme beauty and purity of the angelic man, externally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, who possessed the twelve powers which made him a “life-giving spirit.” Were the ancient virtues of precious stones known in modern times, it would be easy to assign the right principles to each, corresponding to the twelve completed “labours” of the mysteries of the past.

The “twelve gates were twelve pearls; and the street of the city was of gold, like transparent glass.” The way of access to this divine kingdom, and the method of its establishment, were in each the victories of the soul, “the pearl of great price,” in every department of man’s being, and the “golden street” was the pure truth which was the highway of all who belonged to that kingdom, and which was the one great mode of progress among them.

The seer saw “no temple; for God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.” That is, all forms of external worship, and earthly religions had ceased, and man had become united to the Divine Soul, and embodied in his own being the principles of the

"Lamb." His worship was in his perfection, and union with God; in his complete sonship; the glory of man is not to think, but TO BE.

And he saw that the kingdom "had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine upon it; for the glory of God lightened it, and its lamp was the Lamb;" that is, it had no need of any religious organisation, or government, since, in the divine state, man becomes his own priest, and king, and is a law unto himself, being filled with love and wisdom. "Nor could the gates be shut by day, (for there was no night there)." Nor could the sources of this beautiful life be closed, save in darkness that could not exist; all nations had contributed to this condition; all had done their part towards freeing the soul from matter; and into this kingdom of beauty, power, and perfection, nothing that was impure, or untrue could enter, but only those who were purified, and immortal, and embodied the Christ. They had obtained the "twelve degrees," and were victorious over the "last enemy."

And within this kingdom was a "river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding from God and the Lamb." That is, generation had become *re-generation*, and the perfect union of manhood and womanhood maintained the pure stream of immortality in the world. On either side of the river was "the tree of life," the union of the dual forces in their perfection, which created organisations free from all weakness, stain, or blemish. The fruits of the trees were twelve in number, or the highest degree of creative and regenerating capacity, yielded "every month," or making a perpetual summer in all the nations of the earth.

The source of every evil which had cursed mankind had disappeared; the divine had become enthroned; the "Lamb" reigned; men served no longer the "false prophet," or "Baal," but these, and saw the Christ of the ages unveiled, and were even as he was, having his "name on their foreheads." Darkness had become dissipated forever; there was "night no more;" the

“lamp” of churches, and the “sun” of religions were not needed; for the Eternal Soul had become the light and religion of man; and he was invested with immortality and the lasting control of the world.

Concerning this majestic picture of our race more will be said in a few closing observations upon the work of the Nazarene. The final words with which this last vision of John concluded, are full of the simplicity and pathos of the time, and show that he was, as it were, recalled to the sphere of earth, and the events of the hour, and did not realise the deep significance of the prophetic symbols he had witnessed as the result of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth and all that he represented. In the stress of those terrible persecutions of the past, it was wisely hidden from the early Christians that they suffered, not for some sudden and miraculous glory, not for some personal and immediate victory, but for the great future of man, beyond the struggle of the centuries, which had to be lived out fully and completely before the “Christ” could possibly be re-manifested. In proportion as *they* were “faithful and true,” and this should be remembered by all reformers in the present, they were able to give an impulse to that supreme movement of the spirit of Love and Wisdom which had begun a terrible conflict with the nature of physical man. Their reward was sure, but it came not in a swift return of the Nazarene in person to guilty Rome, but in the union of their faithful spirits with eternal righteousness,—with God. The Christ was, indeed, to “come quickly;” it was to shorten the hours of human suffering, but, in the light of mortal calculations, it was still far off. The passages speak for themselves, and breathe the hopes and feelings of the banished and “beloved disciple,” rather than the vast and prophetic panorama of all that had been revealed to him “in the spirit.”

The visions closed. John heard a voice say to him, as it had said before, and very impressively: “These are

true and real things; and the divine spirit of *all* the prophets, sent its 'angel,' the Christ, to show to his followers the things which must shortly come to pass. Behold, I come quickly. He is happy who preserves and is in harmony with the prophecy." The writer, who had been recording his visions, added "of this book," thereby showing that he had passed out of his entranced condition, and was engaged in preserving a full statement of all that had been portrayed to him.

The next passage confirms it. "I, John, am he who heard and saw these things." And once more he repeats that he was inclined to do reverence to his angelic guide, but was forbidden, the angel declaring he was himself devoted to the Christ-work, and was "of those who kept the words of this book," or was one who had attained the power of the spirit. Once more he also added: "*Worship God.*" Need it be said that this majestic spirit of light was the same who was seen by Paul on the road to Damascus, — the Nazarene himself? And do we need also to be reminded that the churches have transgressed this last and emphatic command, and have thereby lost the power to reveal the visions of John? They have slain the spirit of truth, and deprived their souls of the Christ-principles, and of the power of development in the worship not of God, but of one who represented divine humanity for the sake of light for the world, which they have thereby almost extinguished.

He forbade the seer to "seal up the words of the prophecy of the book, since the time was at hand." That is, the record was to be given to the existing churches, and not to be withheld as a volume kept within a secret order, for the great battle was about to commence. It was so worded as to protect the seer from persecution, or the application of any particular vision to current events or persons, while it conveyed the deep lessons of the coming warfare of the Christ-spirit, and its lasting victory, for a future age. It cheered and strengthened those at that time who suffered from the materialism of man; it conveyed lasting lessons

with regard to the various stages of the conflict, and triumph of the "Lamb" over the old "dragon;" and it contained the victory of womanhood.

As a man lived on earth, so would be the result to his spirit then, and at all times. The "unrighteous would be unrighteous still," and the "holy would be made holy still," or increase in purity. Death wrought no magical change. "Behold, I, the Soul, the 'Christ,' appear quickly, as the judgment-hour of the human spirit, and render to each man according to his work. I am the Alpha, and the Omega, the first, and the last, the beginning and the end. Happy are they who have attained the condition of purity, that they may be of the eternal order, and enter into the state of perfection and immortality! Those are excluded who have lived for the physical and the illusive; for self and the senses, instead of truth and the spirit."

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel, or spirit, to show these things for the sake of the churches. I am the beginning, and the result, of the light of Israel, and the herald of the dawn." That is to say, all that was meant by the true kingdom of Israel, all the strength of its religious life, all its deliverance, all its work, all that it possessed of wisdom, seership, prophecy, and true guidance, belonged to the *soul*, the "Christ," the star which foretells the unfolding of the perfect day.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The truth and the divine soul of man lead him upwards. And he who understands, should aspire in their direction, and say, "Come." And he who desired could take "the water of life," or fill himself with the strength of immortality freely.

Then it was declared that if any man who had understood the "words of the prophecy of this book," or the truths of the spirit of man, should "add to them," or be unfaithful to those truths, in the multiplication of ceremonies and forms, he would taste, by a divine law of the "plagues," or sufferings, which arose from his relapse; and if any man should "take away from the

words of the book of this prophecy," or so teach and act as to show that he considered a high ideal of life needless, or a constant living for the spirit rather than the body, essential to the victory of the soul, a divine law would prevent his attaining immortality and the estate of perfection. Adding to what was a perfect and complete guide, could only be done by altering eternal truths in the garb of externalism; subtracting from the principles which were essential to a perfect life, resulted in weakness of the spirit, and the failure to "take the kingdom of heaven by the force of the divine." Both were fatal. Throughout, the record pointed out this truth. At that early date, the churches were already warned.

He who had foretold the warfare said, "*Yes; I come quickly. It is so! The truth of the Soul will, and must be known.*" A thousand years are as one day; and one day as a thousand years, in the light of unchanging principles. Yet the work of Jesus of Nazareth had hastened the hour, and pointed out the way of deliverance. And John, the *true seer*, answered, "Amen!" Oh! that it may be so! *come*, — thou spirit of the "Lord Jesus!" May his strength be with the "saints," the true, the enduring, the faithful, who live for the things of the spirit, to the end!"

Is the "Apocalypse" so incomprehensible? *It was a vision of the initiation of the human race.*

THE FUTURE OF MAN.

THE FUTURE OF MAN.

THE aim of the preceding pages has been, not only to show that the Christ symbolises the divine spirit of man, but to clearly point out, even from the historical and epistolary records, that the entire mission of the Nazarene was consecrated to the highest and purest liberty, and one which demands no volatilisation into mere principles to reveal that this was the case, but an understanding of their spirit in the very form in which they exist. It may be objected that "the Christ" means the soul, and that to dwell on the historical Christ is to revive the old tendencies to idolatry. But of this there can be no fear. As they *are*, the pages of the New Testament are an eternal protest against formalism. As they are, they contain the living portrait of a typical man, and therefore of perfected humanity. As they are, they elevate the soul above the body, and the inspired seer above the church; and therefore, inspiration above sacerdotalism, and seership above rules. A true view of the reality is indeed the sole pathway to the apprehension of the principle.

The work of the Nazarene was to accomplish for the race what the hierophant of old did for the neophyte, to educate it, at whatever cost, into a power and liberty which would result in the deliverance of the spiritual. Himself a soul who had passed through the ages, he was conscious of the truths which had been held sacred, and had been sealed in the great fraternities of the East in the period of its grandeur; and the supreme effort of his incarnation was to convey all that was possible to the people in the spirit of truth and love, and to convert the inevitable price of sacrifice into a final revelation,—that of the higher immortality, corresponding to the

new birth of the initiate who had passed through the essential ordeals.

Even the popular ideal of Jesus, as represented in various paintings and sculptures, is far from incorrect. The Nazarites wore their hair long, and were attired in robes of pure white linen, and both John the Baptist and James evidently belonged to that sect. Jesus is said to have worn a long and seamless garment, and his association with John the Baptist, who was no doubt in sympathy with the Essenes who had so long dwelt in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, probably induced him to wear his hair as it has been so often painted. The very "crown of thorns," which has been drawn with such apparently impossible regularity, is no exaggeration. The writer recently saw a small crown made of the common wayside thorn, brought from Palestine by a lady who had travelled there, and it was twisted with a regularity which made it a fac-simile of the painted ideal. Even the *nimbus*, or halo around the head, reduced by blind and formal mediæval art to a mere ring, could have been seen by the spiritual vision. It was, and is, the natural aura of a grandly inspired brain. In a century when the supposed mythical sacred lotus of Egyptian sculpture has been found dried, yet full of freshness, on the breasts of the last-found mummies of Thebes; when Nineveh has been excavated; the long-doubted Ilium of Homeric verse has emerged from the hill at Hissarlik; and the Rosicrucian is widely known to be no longer a fiction but a fact, it is well to pause before we banish beliefs which seem to have survived the wear of centuries to the region of legend. There may be fact in many a fancied fiction which is as much worth extraction and preservation, as the gold from the dull rock in which it is buried. Because Nari, and Isis, and Astarte have had their litanies, it does not prove that there was, and can be, no virgin-mother. The sceptic cries, "We only believe in nature;" and the wise man answers, "*Study it.*" It is the only method by which the protean forms of

belief, ever changing, ever questioning, ever discarding, ever discovering, ever spirally ascending, can be harmonised into the one living knowledge. To the mass she has been silent, but to the seer and the prophet she has drawn near and whispered some divine word which they have repeated, obtaining, alas! worship rather than recognition.

From the date of the appearance of Jesus, a new power was born into the world, which notwithstanding that most necessary and almost luminous eclipse of modern scientific materialism, has effected certain strange victories over matter which are universal property, and which are beyond all question the supreme significance of the present, beyond any other age. To appreciate their importance, it may be well to take a brief review of the effort of the Christ-principle of love in behalf of the establishment of European civilisation.

The practical efforts of the early Christian societies were undoubtedly exercised in behalf of the poor, the weak, and the oppressed; and their influence, as soon as it could be directly felt, was used in opposition to the institution of slavery, and even against the use of arms. Slavery was a stronghold of vice, and the vast numbers of slaves in Rome at the time of the birth of the Christian religion, unquestionably contributed to the decline of the empire. The Christian societies were successful in the suppression of the gladiatorial games and bloody sports, which kept alive and ministered to the brutal instincts of the people, and condemned the practices of infanticide and suicide. They also taught a virtue which was almost austere in its demands, and denounced and finally abolished, the systematic worship, it may be said, of prostitution, and the flagrant immoralities which a later age in the West learned to discard and discountenance. Gross theatrical representations were discouraged and relinquished through Christian influence, and hospitals for the sick and suffering were founded in Rome, and in other places, conspicuous among which was the institution estab-

lished by a woman, the Roman lady, Fabriola. The Christians, at first, at all events, substituted monotheism for the multiplicity of "gods" attached to the corrupted pagan religions, which like the religion of Egypt in her degenerate days, had become symbolic, and finally idolatrous, and worthless as a power for the spiritual elevation of the people. Even the popular Trinitarianism of the fourth century was an enormous advance and improvement upon the familiar histories of Jupiter, Hercules, Venus, Bacchus, and other mythological characters, whose original interpretations had been lost to all but those who had no need of such symbols. For it gave to the world an everlasting truth in the presentation of an Eternal Spirit, a Divine Humanity, and a Spiritual Influx into the soul.

Even the lives of the early saints and hermits, with all their fanaticism and absurdities, formed a sublime protest against the luxuries and vices of the Roman empire in its decay, and it must never be forgotten that the earnest Christians were forced to the solitudes of the deserts by persecutions, by the hordes of robbers and outlaws which devastated the empire, and by the absence of anything in common with the mental and moral condition of people who were the victims of a worn-out civilisation.

It was the voice of the Spirit to the worshippers in the old temples, — "*Live, O Man, for that which perisheth not!*"

Ambrose of Milan, who courageously excluded Theodosius from the church on account of a bloody massacre, Anthony of Egypt, Severinus of Vienna, Columba of Iona, Brendan of Ireland, Anskar of the North, Adalbert of Sclavonia, Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, to say nothing of the first martyrs for the faith, were among those examples of devotion, self-sacrifice, and chastity, which the men of that age required to witness, and indeed to learn to reverence. The human sacrifices of the corrupted religions of Northern Europe were abolished; and the rude middle ages witnessed those ap-

peals against deadly and lasting feuds, and in behalf of the "truce of God," which were the earliest protests of Christianity against the cruelties of warfare. Dwelling as it did on a life after death, it held up the idea of the equality of men, which survived all the endeavours of the selfish, in and out of the collective church, to destroy it. In a rude age, the monasteries, established all over Europe, effected their work in the interests of a fresh and higher form of civilisation, in the preservation of all that was purely intellectual, the natural result of which, in due season, was, and has been, freedom of thought.

The very vices and cruelties of ecclesiasticism only served to stimulate reform, and the onward growth of that dominant spirit in true Christianity, which lived in behalf of greater refinement, wider views of justice, grander ideas of human liberty, and the quickening of the sense which appreciates unselfishness. The printing-press, amid divers anathemas, was invented. Thenceforth, ideas and opinions became, not the property of the few, but of the many. Luther laid the foundation of freedom of thought, and a nobler idea of womanhood. The married monk who protested against supreme authority in religion, and the worthless practices which had encrusted around its life, held within him the vitality and vigour of a fresh evolution of the original "Christ," and the future reconstruction and reformation of truth.

It was again the "voice of the Spirit to the church," — "*Cease from empty ceremonies, and the love of power.*"

Absolutions, indulgences, the veneration of virgins' petticoats, saints' thigh-bones and thumbs, and holy stairs and toes, were sent to the winds. The very materialism of Protestantism was a stage of progress. It refused to recognise spiritual manifestations under the control of a priesthood which made the prophet second to the ecclesiastic. The best seership was that which was free to study nature and its forces, without fear of

the encyclical, or reference to the Index, and the Protestant countries rapidly became the scenes of research and inventions which have revolutionised the world. Through blood, and tears, and suffering, liberty broke through her various imprisonments, and the Anglo-Saxon race, sturdy, thoughtful, independent, and adapted to live in various climates, embodied the chief mental power of Europe. Ecclesiasticism was compelled to give way in every direction; stakes, tortures, prisons, and condemnations, yielded before the majesty of truth. The true child of Christianity was liberty, and the heretics formed the real "apostolic succession," from Paul, and Polycarp, and Blandina and Perpetua, to Wycliffe, Luther, Galileo, Servetus, and Priestley. Out of Protestantism grew Unitarianism, cold, clear, and philosophical, which gravely and quietly reminded the thoughtful of the original Christian belief, and the declaration of the New Testament. Its voice said, and it was again "the voice of the Spirit to the churches, '*Worship God.*'"

It was an essential stage of the thought which would progress to the true understanding of the Christ, and the eternal relations of the Divine Being to the soul.

The mind of man had become free to think, to act, and to invent. It produced modern science, and gave a gigantic impulse to freedom. For the first time in the history of the planet, masses of men understood how to acquire the indirect control over matter, through imponderable agencies. This is the victory of mind; just as the direct control is that of the spirit. This knowledge was spread abroad over the earth. Men everywhere knew the wonderful uses of steam, and to a large extent of electricity; they sped to other lands, beheld other races of men, acquired profounder views of human life, of the civilisations of the past, of the old struggles of the soul in Egypt, and India, and Persia, and Assyria. Nor are these newly-adapted forces exhausted in their uses; other inventions remain to be born pointing to the annihilation of space and time, and

all prophetic in their character. The discovery of geology, so deeply opposed by priests, and the system of Darwin, against which the bigoted in vain rebelled, revolutionised the old biological conceptions, and the views of the origin of the world. Everywhere the facts were studied, and taught, and remained unassailable in the face of shallow ridicule, and violent antagonism. Man became the brother of all things, even as God is the Father. For him, the rock, the moss, the zoöphyte, the graceful fish, the beautiful bird, the intelligent animal, had each and all new and mighty lessons. The correspondences in nature are sublime, and link together every form of life in universal fraternity. Look, for instance, at the tree, with its leafy head, and outstretched arms, its circulating life-sap, its feet rooted in the soil; its reproductive force in blossom, fruit, and seed, and its capacity to reject worn-out material in the shedding of its leaves, and to assimilate fresh nourishment from air, and earth, and moisture, and grow in branch and foliage. Its leaves utter language; it is stirred by the passion of the storm, and rained upon by the dew of night, and the showers, and bright sun-rays of the day. Not only for man did it spring up, and grow, and increase, and die. Not only to shield, or please him, or yield him its fruit. Yet it gave him the earliest conception of a shelter, and a home, and its avenues at last inspired him with the majestic aisles of his loftiest temples. For the silent spirit of God breathes in this brother of the field, and it has both a mission and a destiny.

Another voice spoke to the churches, and said, "*Study the laws of the physical world, and know, O Man, what thou art, and what is the world around thee!*"

Just when matter seemed to have arisen to declare that it, and not the soul, was "the beginning and the end," a still small voice was heard, which silently whispered to all who were willing to listen, and to all churches and sects, "*Study the laws of thy spiritual being, O Man, and so shalt thou know the spiritual world, and*

KNOW THYSELF, — *whence thou art, and to what thou shalt return !*"

Surely the spirit of the Nazarene has ripened human life and thought for the consummation of his work on earth, and has pointed to a grander manhood, as the fulfilment, and the sole end and object of his incarnation ! Let who will resist it, this must and will come, and with it the liberty of woman. It is not to form the glory of any church or sect under heaven, but to be the glory of man ; to establish universal fraternity ; to break down creed, caste, and race, and to show that the Christ type of humanity is based on principles which have everywhere been secretly, or dimly recognised, and that it is the flower of every esoteric conception of religion, because it is of the soul.

The crime of the Christian church, and in this every form of the Christian sects is included, resides in the fact that instead of preserving and expounding the *principles* illustrated in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, she has worshipped an individual, and therefore closed the very pathway he endeavoured to open to the majority of the people. She has exhorted them to disbelieve in the immortal strength and power of their own souls, in order to fall on their knees before the strong and victorious soul of another. And when we reflect that not only did she reverse the very doctrines the Nazarene enunciated, but actually punished with horrible cruelties the very persons who attempted to use their independent soul-freedom, and arise in its divine light, what can be said of her relation to Christ and to humanity ? If such sins of the past were the children of their time, and of the church and state which represented the dead level of belief among the people, there is all the more reason to explain, proclaim, and determine in terms that admit of no compromise, of no further errors, of no further zealous ecclesiastical proselytism, and of no further, and still more disastrous persecution, that the Christ in *man* is the all-important fact of the work of the past, the redemption of the present, and the hope of the future, and

that it can only be developed in a liberty which lives, and works, and thinks for, and of, the present. It is a lamentable fact that men hear of the Nazarene year after year, from hundreds of thousands of effete pulpits, and do not even know a single fact about their own souls. Nor can they even furnish a philosophical or scientific proof that they have any. Like the converts whom Paul encountered at Ephesus, they might truly say, "We have not so much as heard whether there *is* any holy spirit!" Certainly they have no knowledge of it as a science which may be the property alike of Buddhist, and of Catholic, or Protestant, of the peoples of the East and of the West. The Christ is no shibboleth, no property of pope or priest, to be formulated and worshipped according to order, but an eternal truth, for every age, for every man, and for every land.

The fact that the life of the historical Jesus of Nazareth was based on eternal principles, for the purpose of inaugurating and initiating the multitude in the power of the soul, and revealing the grand wisdom of ancient brotherhoods in a form yet more sublime, will ever command the gratitude and reverence of the world. It was one thing to initiate a neophyte in the recesses of the ancient temple; and another thing to initiate, at the price of fearful suffering, mankind at large, through trial and conflict, in the royal knowledge. Yet it must be ever remembered that the very value of the life of the Nazarene, this, and no further, consists in its illustration, not of miraculous and non-human capacities and faculties, but of spiritual science which has been the inner meaning of every religion, and every myth. It is the recognition of the marked resemblance of the details of his life to ancient and astrological myths, and familiar phenomena, which has led many materialists, and even many wiser than the materialist philosophers, to teach that the Nazarene was himself a myth, thereby destroying the most remarkable prophecy which has ever been given to the world. For, "what man has been, man may be," and the "revelation of the mystery which

had been kept secret through the ages," was given through a living instrument, for the express purpose of embodying and illustrating it in a living race. As the outer life of the earth has been quickened by the physical sun, so did its spiritual life need the spiritual sun, and the connection of the solar orb with the sun-like life, is simply this. Long before his incarnation, the Christ was foreshadowed, and at work.

There are certain lives consecrated by spiritual design, and the guardians of the earth, and therefore, finally, of God, to certain ends, which are universal in their significance. Vicarious suffering has always existed, although vicarious atonement, in the popular sense, is a profound error. Of these, one has been that of a woman, who lived so recently, — not five hundred years ago, — as to be beyond the reach of scepticism, save among those hypercritical minds, which, being without seership, have doubted many things which research and unexpected discovery have proved to be true. The life of Joan of Arc illustrated and prophesied the effort of *woman* in the near future to become free, and therefore to liberate the human race. Her retired and apparently powerless and obscure position, the old prophecy of the work of "the maid," her sudden gift of seership, the appeal of St. Michael to her to "save France," her perilous journey to the king through "the way beset with enemies," the wearing of the male dress, the finding of the consecrated sword, concealed and forgotten in the old church, the uplifting of the white banner with the symbolical *lilies* wrought upon it, the raising of the siege of Orleans, the crowning of Charles the *seventh* as king of France, with the subsequent treachery, false accusations of others, the silence and ingratitude of the king, and her martyrdom through the efforts of priests, and for the heresy of declaring her inspirations came from God without the direction of the church, — are pictures of the trials and sufferings of the woman-reformer in behalf of a nobler social system, and the fierce conflict which will surround every woman, who, like Joan of

Arc, is a seer, who knows she can aid in liberating, no longer France, but mankind. The incidents of their lives are sure to be paralleled by the singular events of a life which was from childhood to death a prophecy of the woman-seer, and her conflict with the bondage of physical and legal marriage, and its intolerable wrongs and injuries on offspring. Many women in the present century have, one after another, borne a portion of that "cross" which helps to "take away the sins of the world." The names of some have been honoured; those of others unknown and merged in a cause, seeking no recognition from their kind, thirsting for no reputation, asking for no sceptre to wield over others, knowing nothing of ambition, or aught that is unfaithful, yet helping to build up that supreme temple which perishes not nor changes, and is as a living incense of praise and prayer. These are they

"whose meek brows bear
The thorny crown of perfect sacrifice,
Whose simple souls are royal unaware.

Lives to one sacred mission consecrate,
Of duty death alone can swerve them from,
Or love that glorifies their lowly state
Through fiery pangs of live-long martyrdom."

The completion of the Christ-work, the great purpose of which has been briefly outlined, must be inaugurated by the coöperation of woman with man, the steady progress towards which has been such a remarkable feature of this century. All over Europe, and especially in England and America, the education, and recognition of woman as one-half of a common humanity, has been rapidly advancing. A woman, thoroughly feminine in her nature, and domestic in her tastes, wears the crown which is the symbol of the highest social, and was once the symbol of the highest governing, position, among the English race and its world-wide ramifications and colonies. In America, a nation singularly responsive in its appreciation and practical adoption of new ideas,

woman is free to speak and act in a way impossible in a country of class and caste. And at no very distant date it is probable that a presidentess will be co-elected with a president, thereby elevating the United States to a supreme and exemplary attitude on the earth in point of superior principles of representative government.

This movement is the sixth "voice of the Spirit to the churches" and to man, saying, "*Remove the curse of the earth, and crush the serpent's head by giving liberty unto woman in all things. For she is Love, and Love must be united to Wisdom, to bring forth the elements of true knowledge and progress.*"

It is no less one of the great signs of the times, of the re-manifestation of the Christ, that the profound thinkers of the century realise the falsities and imperfection of the old social system of legal marriage, by which woman is compelled to be wife and mother, after experience has often taught her that she should only be friend. The love-nature of man and woman have formed for ages the gigantic cross upon which millions have been stretched and sacrificed, for the sake of the great Easter of the life to come. Sex is the sublime creative force in nature. In difference of sex reside conditions and possibilities without which social advancement would have been impossible. It has been, and is, as it were, the steam in the engine which moves all its machinery and impels it forward. Without the ties of family life, without the necessity for the labours which must necessarily follow parentage, the elements from which our varied arts and sciences have sprung would never have existed. To work for pure love of the improvement of our state, marks a high stage in human development, and one which we may safely say could never have been reached, had not a necessity and a deep impulse in the direction of industry primarily existed in the fact of parentage. It has produced, indirectly, arts and sciences, as well as races. This was its outer work, the passing from the innocent Eden; but there is a greater, and an inner one, in perfect marriage,

in which the soul-force, thus expended in the external through the ages, is concentrated through harmonious union in the direction of *re*-creation and *re*-generation, and becomes a mighty power for the evolution of perfect manhood. In this marriage man and woman become the agents of God,—the Creator; and are the *re*-creators of that which has already been created. Of which Mary, and the “Holy Spirit,” bringing forth the Christ, in pure freedom, were the great prophecy. This work will, of necessity, be a gradual one; the “new birth” will be progressive; the evolution of the soul-powers, and the destruction of death. First, and for a lengthy period, highly spiritualised organisations will be born through superior unions; psychic faculties will be strongly manifested, and the transition of the spirit from the physical body will cease to be a struggle, and become like a translation. Then will occur those incarnations and unions of the dual soul, which defy space and time, and are eternal. These will form the direct and perfect way to the Christ-life, and the perfect race, the organisation being rapidly sublimated, and the door opened for the souls which are attracted to, and strengthened and purified by, this final contact with matter.

The sufferings of woman in child-birth will naturally cease; for the child, instead of being a material and inflexible substance to be forcibly and slowly expelled from the most sensitive part of her organism, with fearful pain, effort, and torture, which almost always causes sickness and exhaustion, and occasionally, death, will be materialised from that wonderful laboratory of nature which will be the building-chamber of soul as well as matter, and motherhood will be the hope, joy, and desire of womanhood. The laws of evolution, which assure the “survival of the fittest,” will select and sustain the spiritual race in preference to the purely physical, until the former vanquishes disintegration and death. The spiritual man will be by nature and organisation an adept; in harmony with the inner forces of nature; capable of feeding on elements too

fine to be cognisable by those who consume the carcasses of the slaughter-house; breathing the very *soul* of the atmosphere; eating the sun-ripened fruits and grains; living in the life-giving spheres of colonies, and presences of those like himself;¹ working for his pleasure, and his development, but laboring no more, passing from place to place like a spirit at his will. His blood will be a spiritual essence; his substance pure as that of a spirit; his body free from waste and rejection, since nothing will be absorbed into it but what is transmuted into living particles. He will be completely liberated; it will be the completion of the journey from the lost Paradise of unconscious repose, to the Paradise regained, which is the conscious rest of Love and Wisdom. Man was not born on this planet to be its slave; to toil in sorrow for his daily bread, and to encounter only the thorns and thistles of barren ground; he shall not always pass to the other world over "the bridge of sighs;" there is an Eden; the door is the soul; and the marriage of the soul is the key which alone opens it to all.

Woman "silent!" She has to teach the whole world the power and grandeur of marriage, and of divine motherhood. It is not the divine union of the soul with the individual man, which has been so long taught in the ancient philosophies, and so seldom gained, but the divine union of the dual soul in man and woman, producing inspiration, life, health, energy, strength, will, spiritual men and women. It is no work of license; far from it. Virgin purity in the twain must accomplish this, or the instinctive refusal to marry on any plane save the highest, since thus alone can woman bring forth in power. There is, indeed, a profound truth in the beauty of virginity. Like "silence," it is "strength." The woman who suffers the mere caresses, and the prolonged society of men in whom

¹ This principle is illustrated in rudimentary form even now. In the society of some persons who breathe out a life-giving aura, but little food is required; in the same way depletion, which no amount of mere food can arrest, follows in the presence of others.

earthly loves are awakened, loses the crown of her virginity, even though she preserve it in form. She is surrounded with a variety of magnetisms, far from life-producing, or health-sustaining, in which there is no rest for the spirit. There is an ancient "sign" in the starry heavens above, named and preserved by seers who knew. They are *Virgo*, *Libra*, and *Scorpio*; the pure "woman-conquerer," through equality, leading the dragon captive. Women who desire perfect motherhood must repudiate close friendships with men of passional nature. Their mission is freedom of love in the sole direction in which eternal laws declare it should be expressed; not "free love." The first is concentration; the second, disintegration. The first only directs force in its highest creative channel, and neither requires nor demands other expression; the second, is the legitimate out-working of passional affections, impulses, and desires, whenever they arise. It certainly is not friendship, and where passion exists, it will influence the organism, and insist on its final utterance, thereby necessarily expending itself in the physical, for the average individual may experience more than one, indeed several, affectional attractions. Nevertheless, if there be unceasing and uncontrolled desire for the affection and companionship of the other sex, far better is it to give it free expression, than to live the loveless lives of hypocrisy and wretchedness, which, in large numbers of women produce evils of body and mind, seldom traced to their true source. Woman is as truly a victim of the want of love, as she is of selfish passion. Her organisation is a flower which the desert withers as well as the storm. The cry of her spirit ever is for love, nor can she unfold save within its sunshine. Let none therefore judge womanhood harshly for obeying an unconscious and profound impulse of nature, for the coming judgment of true purity, will be far different from that which society has taught, and it will search and enter into every life and disclose hidden fountains of clear water, as well as whited sepulchres, where both are least expected;

and unlock many long-closed prison-doors. The *nirvana* of conjugal love is to love the embodiment of the masculine, or feminine, half of the soul; the *nirvana* of the planet is the offspring born of the union, which will be united to the Eternal Soul; the *nirvana* of the spiritual spheres, is the duality of the angel, which produces an unceasing radiation of life, and creation of Will, Wisdom, and Force. From this Easter of the Love-principle is produced all wisdom; just as from its crucifixion are produced every form of weakness and evil, and a civilisation which is only external. There is a physical fire which consumes and changes; and a spiritual fire which is an ever-burning flame. The physical body, sustained by the circulation of heated blood, nourished from food combustion, or the heat wrought by chemical changes taking place in elements derived from continual diet, cannot be a suitable instrument for the perfect action of the spirit, and the triumphs of the adept consisted in surmounting the fearful obstacles placed in his way by his material body, a task for which not one in a million has been suited by hereditary tendencies, temperament, cerebral capacity, organisation, or spiritual bias and development. All honour to those who *overcame*! But of their bodies, from which they were so free to roam, as of the bodies of other men, the words, at last, could still be said, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust!" The physical fire, so subdued and counteracted, consumed them in the end; and when asleep to earth, but alive to the spiritual world, they were compelled to leave their bodies to be tended and cared for, as burdens, or instruments, essential to their growth and condition of being. The spiritual body will efface these struggles and necessities. It will be a combination of the physical, astral, and spiritual forms, which will permit of appearing and vanishing, ascending, and passing from continent to continent at will; of becoming sublimated in all its particles at the desired moment of permanent passage from the earth-plane,—and of effectually destroying the

"last enemy." No books can accomplish this; no "words" uttered by man, woman, or angel; no initiations in secret brotherhoods; no regulations and rules followed by individuals; no reformatory societies, on whatever plane. There is only one pathway. Man has a four-fold expression of being; the physical body, the astral, the immortal soul, and the divine spirit. The astral man is the product of the temporary physical body, which it resembles, and is in close sympathy with it; it vanishes with reëmbodiment, and is liable to disintegration. Animals possess astral bodies, and those of pets, which have been saturated with human magnetism and influences, survive death for a considerable period. The soul is immortal, dual, and may be incarnated in two forms, thus outwardly expressing itself as man and woman; the divine spirit is the eternal, informing and angelic agent, which, in close union with the soul, elevates it above all that is material, endows it with the strength of its age-long upward struggle, memory, and experience, and inspires it with all that is god-like. Hence the conscious union of the two-in-one lifts marriage to a plane in which the life and light of the eternal has the power of direct operation, and is not only able to sustain, strengthen, redeem, and illuminate the twain thus united, but to generate truth, and regenerate offspring. It is the "holy spirit," and the "immaculate conception," scientifically developed. And it is the mission, which of all others is before woman, who must first awaken, and respond to its beauty.

It is the *work of the Spirit*, amid human lives and destinies, "called" in the way and manner of which it was prophesied of old that "one should be taken, and the other left," ripened by former lives, struggles of the past, and faithful victories over the material,—the martyrs of the Christ-work in the mighty effort for universal development, both before and since the incarnation of the one known as the Nazarene,—and the last and seventh "voice of the Spirit to the churches" and to man is this: "*What God hath joined together*

let not man put asunder, for they must bring forth the Tree of Life upon the earth."

The masters of spiritual science, who had little in common with ordinary human life, to which, indeed, they had become dead, had been at once the kings and outcasts of the earth, even as was Christ; but that they lacked the capacity to diffuse their supreme secret among mankind by stages corresponding to the initiation of the individual, has been proved by the condition of Egypt and the East, where woman has been degraded for thousands of years, and where womanhood, among the populace, is hopelessly misunderstood. It was the grand work of Christ to effect what the ancient orders could not, and did not, do, and those who assert that his crucifixion arose from imperfection know not what they say. It was, on the contrary, a necessity of his mission, and the only mode in which his ideas and life could be conveyed at that age to the world, and thus furnish it with the necessary impulsive force, working gradually upwards in other lives and other races, and guided by angelic wisdom, until it reached the desired plane.

For it may be known as an eternal law, that man cannot be redeemed by a power external to himself. Had this been possible, an angel might long ago have visited the cities of the earth, uttered heavenly truths, and, by manifesting the faculties of a spiritual nature, proved a hundred facts to the consciousness of man of which he is ignorant. But this is not the law of divine growth. The Christ appears in a form for the moment the reverse of the popular conceptions of the angelic. His work is not to force truth on unripe souls, but to show a divine pathway in which men must learn to walk by their own efforts. In the fulness of time, he stands revealed as the grand initiator, thereby fulfilling the words which are true only of the Soul — "*I am the first and the last, and the living one, and have the keys of death and hell. And, behold, I am alive for evermore.*"

Side by side with the growth of knowledge and liberty has grown, at first, a silent, and finally, an expressed appreciation of the nature of womanhood. It arose out of Christianity, and in spite of the words of Paul. The rules of the Jewish priesthood, elaborated long before the time of Moses, excluded woman from all active participation in religious services, and accounted male, "holier" than female, offspring. The Talmud forbade the instruction of woman in the law, and polygamy was also permitted. Among the Romans, women were kept in a state of tutelage. In the later ages of the Greeks, women, unless they braved the criticisms of their time, and accepted, like the beautiful and gifted Aspasia, a position in which legal obligations were second to influence and culture, remained in the same condition. On the other hand, prostitution was universal, and exercised its most potent influences within the temples. The earliest struggle of Christianity was in favor of purity, and the sanctity of the best ideal the age afforded of monogamic marriage. Again, a wave of asceticism repudiated the coöperation and companionship of woman in the interests of a supposed virtue which was only preserved by scrupulously avoiding temptation; to be followed by a wave of chivalry which idealised and revered her. The church admitted woman in the subordinate offices of an abbess, a deaconess, a sister of religious orders, which sheltered her in rude ages, and a certain ideal of the glory of maternity was maintained in the "worship of the virgin." Protestantism relinquished the elevation of one woman for the elevation of womanhood, and women withdrew from the convents to pass, after a period of silence and eclipse, into a wider arena, and finally, as in America, into the pulpits of the more liberal churches, and on the platform of an absolutely free religious system. The ultimate stage of the manifestation of the soul-equality of the two sexes, and the absolute necessity of their conjunction, not only in church, state, and industrial institutions, but in that

interior life which will render religious buildings, governments, and toil, conditions of the past, remain to be unfolded, and will complete the work of development. A well-known professor has remarked that the day is rapidly approaching when "four-fifths of the human race will trace their pedigree to English forefathers," the Anglo-Saxon race having been centred in an island too small for the energies of its people, who were singularly adapted to live in the most varied climates and under the most varied conditions. This will result in a common language, and in the great future realise the prophecy of the poet in the establishment of "a federation of the world." Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and various English-speaking colonies, which carry with them the forces of civilisation, ought, at the earliest opportunity, to exchange the sword for the ploughshare, and proclaim to every race of men with whom they come in contact that they desire to coöperate with them as friends and brothers; and to this end, they should bear with them a broad Christianity which is no longer stained by Jesuitism, and the lust of religious dominion, no longer paralysed by teaching the subordination of woman, and which, revealed in its true colours, will cease, for instance, to be distasteful to educated Hindoos and to the five hundred million Buddhists to whom Sakya Muni fulfils a great ideal and one capable of vast work in its power of pointing to profound individual soul-development. Nothing unites men so deeply as a common religion, and to work for the unity of all creeds by exhibiting their common basis, their real meaning, and their wide-spread correspondences, is one of the noblest efforts which can be made by those who see the infinite result of true and liberated religion in its highest and most exalted sense. It is useless to carry ecclesiastical Christianity to the East, and to attempt to elevate the starved and crippled womanhood there, by what may be called the ceremonies of the sepulchre rather than the arisen Love and Wisdom which can alone be the teacher of men, and able

to create the great Easter of the world. It is even worse than useless, it is endeavouring to disseminate disastrous errors.

The great lesson of the nations is to exchange desire of dominion, and narrow and selfish patriotism for co-operation and fraternity; to prefer justice and freedom to the ephemeral glory of crowned heads, and isolated states and armies, which must some day become conditions of the past. It was a universal end which assured the independence of the old American colonies, created a republic with its sentiment of equality and love of industry, rather than arms; and freed a people whose social condition was homogeneous and liberal, from the dominion of a state in which hereditary position, influence, traditions, wealth, and landed property, tend to preserve those false and exterior estimates of human worth and dignity, which are at variance with progress. The crown and sceptre of the king, and the ermined robe and coronet of the peer, so useful in the middle ages with their intense pride of race and love of warfare, will be almost out of date in the century to come. So also will the desire of bloodshed which has sent its destructive waves even over Europe and America, and in the teeth of a civilisation which could, and ought, to have settled the disputes in question by arbitration. International murder is, indeed, worthy only of savage tribes. The victories of war are very tarnished ones; the cherished flags riddled with shot, and ragged with long-honoured use and service. breathe of a courage which might have been displayed in a far nobler heroism, a far greater self-sacrifice. They must soon cease to do their work, the work of the earthquake, the volcano, and the lightning-bolt. Intellect, industry, enterprise, invention, reformation, are becoming the primal forces of our age. Intelligent labour must supersede the use of men as machines, and give them leisure to develop the mental faculties, which have been among large classes so long neglected. Land should be held by all proprietors for the service of

the people; to furnish them with grains, fruits, vegetables, flowers, and also parks, gardens, and woods, which they should be educated from childhood to love, together with the least of the wild flowers, and song-birds therein.

The punishment of wrong-doers, the "criminal classes," as they are described, should be reformatory, and never penal, least of all destructive in character. The majority have been more sinned against than sinning, and most deeply wronged, in the nature of the organisations with which they have been brought into the world. It is a crime to kill a man because he has committed the crime of taking away the life of another. He has a right to live in the body, in order to repent, reform, and to work for the benefit of society, which justly deprives him of liberty. It is wrong to imprison a man for association with a woman other than his wife. Purity cannot be established by human laws, and these have no sort of right to dictate or compel on questions relating to the morals of the sexes, since "lawful marriage" itself may become as great a stronghold of prostitution and immorality as the relations it condemns. Man must learn how to use the functions of his body aright; they cannot be considered legal property, and regulated by magistrates. And polygamy can only be abolished by improved conditions of birth and organisation.

It is wrong so to degrade the thief as to forbid his regaining self-respect, or the capacity to work for his own living. Who were his father and mother? Where did he live? How was he educated? Enter the miserable courts and alleys of London, which are schools of vice, and ask how it is possible that such places are tolerated at this hour, and how it is those airless, filthy dens do not breathe forth pestilence and plague, which would awaken the people to the wrongs which society commits upon brother and sister human beings. Persons have been known, even of late years, to starve to death among the very poor; and those who have not starved,

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have existed in a living death, removed from all that is beautiful, all that can refine, all that can give hope and comfort, and deprived even of the common necessities of decent food and clothing. *What is theft?* As a principle, it is the desire to deprive others of that which belongs to them. Who, then, are the real thieves? Ask yourselves, ye rich, who delight in adding house to house, and acre to acre! No jail closes around you with stony wall, and dismal door; but you dwell in a far worse prison of your own building, the same which made one of old say that it was hard to be delivered from it, and to "enter the kingdom of heaven."

Crime is committed in the spirit as truly as in the deeds of the body. He who for any cause hates another, who loves revenge, and will not forgive an injury, is full of the spirit of murder, though none may know it. He who bows before false creeds, and crushes his conscience at the bidding of any institution, blasphemes his own divine soul, and therefore "takes the name of God in vain," though he never utters an oath. He who desires, and is in sympathy with the mere pleasures of sense, either in or out of the married relation is the real adulterer, though not a word be spoken against him. He who deprives any of his fellows of the light, the good, the help, the assistance he can wisely give them, and lives for the accumulation of material things, for his own personal gratification, is the real robber, although all acquit him; and he, also, who steals from his fellows the precious possession of character by slander, and any sort of misrepresentation, is no less a thief, and one of the most guilty kind.

Therefore, there are many sinners at large who are honoured and respected, and live and die free from any evil reputation, as well as many unfortunate and wronged ones within the prisons, who are despised and wretched because they are convicted by the laws of men. In the open book of life, where all secrets are known to all, hypocrisies and deceptions are impossible.

It is when nations turn from fightings without to re-

reform within, that the career of woman, who represents the Love principle necessarily opens. She, who has suffered so deeply in a system of marriage in which love has been so constantly violated, cannot fail to ponder on the origin of evil, and point out the real "Satan" of the world. She sees the sufferings she has undergone in her own being, the diseases, the exhaustion, the unwelcome motherhood, the pangs of birth, reproduced in the myriad hospitals, asylums, prisons, feebleness, tyranny, violation of human rights, fierce struggles by force for a new order of life, which are everywhere to be seen. She knows the secret of reform; a better and nobler use of parentage; a grander and greater development of offspring. Man is not only a creature; he is a *creator*. Alas! that he should so ignorantly fulfil, and so constantly transgress, the law of his divine mission!

With the knowledge of the nature and destiny of the soul, arose the star of woman's freedom! It was the great lesson the angels of heaven, the spirits of the Christ-sphere, desired to teach mankind. They selected woman as the first instrument of the teaching of that alphabet which revealed the book of life; they instituted a church of the Spirit in which her inspirations were uttered as well as those of man; they taught through her lips principles of reform which will defy time, and surmount all opposition. They wrote their new scriptures through the hand of woman, as well as that of man, and wherever the voice of the Spirit has been heard, in whatever land, it has said, in spite of the anathemas of churches, and the frowns of those who prefer popularity to truth, and sin to fearless speaking — "*Let woman be free!*"

The freedom she demands is something more than that which confers a vote, sits in a presidential chair, wears a crown, or studies art, literature, or science. It is the freedom of maternity in a marriage which may celebrate its honorable social customs, but refuses to be bound by legal obligations. Nothing else, and

nothing less, will liberate womanhood. Nothing else, and nothing less will liberate the human race, and inaugurate the age of Soul. The children of such unions should be legally registered, provided for, and named, but the mother should at all costs be sovereign over her own being, and the only babes she should bear should be those who are welcome, chastely and lovingly conceived, chastely and tenderly gestated, and born into a sphere of pure affection. The elements of love, wisdom, and health, should be their heritage from the earliest moment of their being, and these elements belong to the spiritual and not to the physical. It has been said that the incarnating soul provides its own destiny, and selects its own conditions of parentage, and this is to a certain extent true. But there is a regenerating and re-creative power in man and woman which can convey a new impulse to weak spirits, and the tendency of which is to draw those strong spirits on earth which its great future requires. They cannot be embodied in coarse and inferior organisations, bearing the burdens of the accumulated and hereditary diseases and idiosyncrasies of the parents. They require fine, harmonious, and spiritual forms which may become the perfect instruments of the soul, and which have been penetrated and quickened by the purest love, and the elements of wisdom which so powerfully aid the growth of the intellect.

Moreover, woman may become a mother in her inspirations; her children may be truths; her love may bring forth the wisdom which she receives from man. It is the higher law of parentage, similar to that superior force employed in producing the incarnation of the Nazarene, and who can bind divine laws, and forbid the marriage of those who were never twain? It is a science, and the sole effectual one through which the painful conditions of continual physical re-embodiment will be removed, and a race evolved which will no longer be the prisoners, but the masters of the planet. The knowledge through which this science is made known,

is the same knowledge which teaches the true nature of heaven, hell, sin, judgment, purgatory, Satan, humanity, spirits, and God. To spiritual revelations has been due this great work, and its elementary lessons were designedly made as simple as possible, in order that the hard materialism of creeds might be sufficiently broken up, to permit of a philosophy of life being received at a later date. This is why a class of spirits near the earth-sphere has been generally employed, whose fallibility in many respects would be gradually learned, and lead to a further stage of spiritual knowledge, that which deals with the kingdom within, rather than guidance without. Many have been the intentional, as well as the innocent deceptions wrought through the agency of these spiritual beings. Women have been misled into wild missions, which nevertheless aided in breaking up old ideas of marriage and motherhood, at the expense of the peace of individuals. Men have dwelt on a "summer-land," they failed to teach others how to attain,—which nevertheless removed the old views of a heaven of clouds, harps, and palms, and furnished a reasonable view of existence in a more spiritual condition. Jesuit spirits have set to work with the old ingenuity to obtain control of the entire movement, and regulate all reforms in behalf of the sole glory of the Roman church. All these have been grave dangers; many ancient and honoured names have been assumed; many angelic spirits for whose close companionship the earth is very far from ripe, have been personated; many ancients and sages have been represented as visibly materialising in rooms in the heart of cities, filled with the heat and effluvia of human bodies and emanations; and while some have declared the Nazarene to be a solar myth, others have supposed that he was their especial guardian, or had even manifested himself in visible form from an accustomed cabinet.

There are eternal, and universal laws; and one of these laws is, that until the surface, the life, and the atmosphere of the planet become sufficiently pure,

there cannot be close intercommunion between man and the great spirits of the Christ-sphere. They speak best and most wisely through the soul of man, and influence an Emerson, a Theodore Parker, a Garrison, a Harriet Beecher Stowe, as powerfully as a sensitive who has the gift of psychometry and clairvoyance.

It is for man to decide, whether, by obedience to divine law, he will make his world so beautiful, in co-operation with the spirits of the wise and great whose voice has never ceased to plead for truth, purity, and freedom, that the Nazarene shall again speak face to face with those who daily hear his name, but who scarcely dream of what he is. And not only himself, but those of his order. The great arcana of spiritual life and its varied spheres can only be fully penetrated by the perfect seer. There are elemental, elementary, astral, immortal, and angelic spirits, and these are variously attracted to various individuals and conditions. To distinguish each from each, and the spirits of light from the spirits of darkness, who can and do at times, assume their names and forms, and who themselves await embodiment, education and true knowledge, will be a faculty of the seer to come. "*Believe not every spirit,*" said one of old. Accept not *all* they say.

Believe not those who exalt woman above man, for they are equal powers. The use of the feminine pronoun in describing the soul, the earth, the moon, a church, a ship, is arbitrary, and has no profound scientific or philosophical foundation.

Believe not those who desire to rule, and claim to give final wisdom to the world; for there must be many instruments of truth, as there are many strings struck to make perfect music on a harp, and each must be heard in order to produce harmony.

Believe not those who declare they will lead forth woman with a heavenly bridegroom, and regenerate the earth with the sudden birth of a Christ; for the world no longer needs an individual Christ, and the

interior forces of nature will be silently employed in man and woman by the action of law, and a more spiritual race gradually evolved.

Believe not those who work for sectarian interests; for there have been many churches and forms of religion, and many spiritual appearances of virgins, saints, and Buddhas, and truth, as well as error, have been contained in all.

Believe not those who teach that mankind can be regenerated, or even benefited, by passion and its free expressions; for true love, which is of the soul, is continent, and its liberty is of a pure order, which recoils from miscellaneous caresses.

Believe not those who speak with the silver tongues of angels, and inspire hatred, persecution, and strife among reformers, for they lead to the valley wherein is the fire of remorse and sorrow.

Believe not the iconoclasts, who ridicule sacred truths they do not understand, and scoff at the great martyr-lives of the past, for it is through their sacrifices that the present has been made possible.

Believe not those who enslave their instruments, and dominate them, for it is the first duty of man to know himself, and the divine within him. and passive obedience to spirits or mortals, leads into quagmires and barrenness. Jesus was the medium of God. He represented the interior force of the soul, and however guided and protected by guardian angels, accomplished his deeds of power, and uttered his inspirations, from the central force of his being, and never under the blind control of spiritual agents. Hence he was in union with the divine spirit of Truth, and soared far above the ideas of a year, or a century, giving voice to all that is world-wide and eternal. In their day and generation spirits who entrance and resolve men into passive instruments, may accomplish wise and essential work; and they may also become the agents of deception. The angelic order of spirits desire to develop the power of

the free soul. The former may be needed, and some may be wise, and some foolish and ignorant, but they form a "John the Baptist" to the seers to come.

Believe not those who deny the personal existence of Jesus of Nazareth, for the higher intelligences know what his life has won and foreshadowed for man. And when they testify of him they declare that he is a living power in the great world of spirit, at work for human welfare still, and that "wherever he passes he leaves the light of his presence."

These are sufficient guides in that development of seership which is the necessary and natural sequence of the ripening of the intellect and moral sense, and which must and will grow. It must grow, it can only grow, upwards, and produce health, vigour of mind, and spiritualisation of body, self-control, freedom, self-reliance, and faith in, and knowledge of, the divine. To man's own conscience and judgment are left the supreme utilisation of these first universal efforts at intercommunion between the material and spiritual planes of existence. Those who seek it for purely personal and selfish objects, will reap as they sow, for the voice of truth will not be uttered to such as desire to increase their wealth in stocks and investments, to indulge in empty gossip, or to acquire knowledge which is of earth, and for earthly ends. The condition which will make man a perfect seer will lift him above the interests and desires of the moment, into the sphere of eternal light. Half of the follies which have been charged to the work of spiritual unfoldment are due to spirits in the body; the remaining half to those immature spirits who are not purified from matter, and whom the former attract around them. Nor will a barren asceticism, or zealous devotion without wisdom, avail in the interests of progress, for the lesson of the past has shown that many have suffered from obsession in religious houses, and the blossoms of the soul-life therein have been exceedingly few. The prophet who yields to the priest, gives up his birthright, and relinquishes divine truth

for earthly empire. Nor among the saints of old were any found strong enough to protest against the martyrdoms of their fellows, and say to their church,—“*It is a sin!*” The truth of the angels will and must be free, and utter itself as the sound of a trumpet to awake the slumbering dead. What said the spirit by Isaiah long ago to the Hebrew priests? “*Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*” . . . “*At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One. . . And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.*” . . . “*The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep and hath closed your eyes. . . The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.*” . . . “*The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*”

Moreover, the priests have educated the people in the belief in the subjection of woman in legal marriage, and have thereby made “a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell.” In this matter, the spirit of the child is wiser than the saint of the calendar; and the utterance of the spirit of a poor woman who has tasted of the cup of these bitter wrongs, and has seen their results, transcends the wisdom of Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon. For before the splendour of the great race to come can be evolved, the ideas of all nations must undergo a revolution of their views on the subject of sex.

“*After the long tribulation,*” — the struggle for the light of truth which has followed the mission of the Nazarene, and as the birth of a new era commences, — “the sun of the church shall be darkened, and the moon of earthly governments shall not give her light,” and

those who have been regarded as "stars," the high-priests of religion, and material science, "shall fall from heaven," or their former exalted estate; "and the powers of the heavens," or those invisible beings and influences which have manifested themselves to uphold these things, "shall be shaken," and known, not as they seemed, but as they *are*.

"*Then* shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven," which is the Cross; the symbol of the martyrdom which has brought forth Immortality: the symbol of Life, and the victory of the Soul; of the divine marriage; the prophecy of the angelic race to come.¹

The cross of Egypt, the *crux ausata* of Osiris, signifies the mighty powers of man and woman, producing the tree of life, and its twelve healing fruits. And there is not a building dedicated to Christian worship which does not contain the familiar but long-forgotten and unrecognised phallic emblems of nature's most profound and mysterious force. Man is one; the unit, the force indestructible, unchanging, vitalising, creative, and active; the eternal Wisdom which has been, and which is to be: woman is the duad; the principle which receives, multiplies, gives life, and is both passive and re-creative; the eternal Love which has brought forth in suffering, and which will bring forth in joy. The two are the perfect number, and standing side by side form the twelve. In man the force of sex resides in brain and external organs; his brain is reflective, ratiocinative, inventive, life-giving, creative; in woman the force of sex resides in heart (or emotion), and interior organisation; her whole formation expresses, not momentary union, not incidental love, but motherhood. Her brain is receptive, inspirational, intuitional, perceptive, re-creative; she gives new forms to wisdom, fresh life to truth; but her grandest force is to project her love-principle into every phase of human life, and every social institution, and thereby reform them; and to give birth to that more perfect humanity which can never be

¹ Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.

divorced from its Soul, and will be the masters of matter through higher organisation. There is nothing these twin powers cannot bring forth, for they are projections of the divine; co-equal, and co-eternal; and descending and creating, and ascending and re-creating, they exercise their most potent force when in perfect harmony, and in union similar to that which first sent them forth, for the Eternal Soul is One. The struggle of planetary life has been to re-unite these two forces which matter has divorced in the interior, or spiritual, thereby producing the perishable, and corruptible; evil, wrongs, sufferings, disease of body and mind, in the social order, and death in the race, and all its religions. External union may create all manner of exterior and perishing forms, but spirit is unable to rest in them, and expends its strength in perpetual embodiment, and the effort to attain a more complete expression of its condition, until through the law of adaptation, it is able to unite the generative energy in the interior, and in union with the Soul of the universe, when the object of planetary existence becomes attained, and it brings forth seership, power, reformation, repose, equilibrium. The two are co-operative, and in complete harmony, nor can the one rule over the other; nor is the woman more exalted than the man.

If *one* Christ could accomplish so much in the face of the death which existed all around him; what will not the Christ-order be able to do amid the life-giving sphere of love, harmony, and sympathy which belong to the dual principle? The prophecy will indeed at last be fulfilled that "greater works" shall be performed. It has been for the sake of this, that souls strong enough to face the dread spectacle of the "dwellers on the threshold," were permitted to endure the Inquisition, prisons, and martyrdoms of the past, thus shortening the imprisonment of the race, and carrying on with far greater impetus than would otherwise have been possible, the great work of initiation leading to the adeptship of the future.

The sole way of further reformation, is through a higher law of marriage, and the liberty of woman. If profound wisdom alone could have redeemed mankind, or it could have been regenerated through societies, and religious institutions, the earth would long ago have gained its Eden. But the redemption of the wisdom of the past was for the individual, and of such a nature that it was out of the reach of all but the very few, who were compelled to conceal it from the unripe minds and morality of the people; and the redeeming power of societies and religions have been paralysed by the condition of the individual members who form and believe in them, and who are, with rare exceptions, just as material, just as selfish, and just as weak, as they were before they thus united, or thus believed. They are of the intellect alone, and the exterior. In a brief period, the society, or the religion, falls from the ideal to the level of the multitude, because it is a universal law that man can only collectively ascend through the action of the life-giving forces which affect organisation. There can be *no* external redemption. Man cannot be the mere instrument even of an angel: he is by nature the son of God. Truth must be born, not externally inspired; love must be born, not simulated by rules of living. So also must the Christ-principles be again embodied, or "made flesh" in a higher race. It is useless to work for the sick, when the conditions of disease are imparted before birth. It is useless to form temperance societies when the craving for stimulants is produced by hereditary lack of vitality. It is useless to rescue the prostitute, so long as man himself is the child and victim of passion. It is useless to enter the churches which ever profess to teach the glory of immortality, when they cannot reveal the laws which produce death and hell, and use all the influence they possess to preserve the Anti-Christ, the *great divorce* which produces them. It is useless to work for universal fraternity, and the abolition of every form of wrong, when the glorious light of love is forever being excluded from

human eyes, and the destructive agency is at work among the human beings who unite for these objects, and who labour by the old method of domination, rather than obedience to divine law. It is the law which made Jesus of Nazareth stronger than the revered and popular church, stronger than a nation which reviled him, stronger than an empire which crucified him, stronger than the centuries which opposed every stage of the outpouring of his spirit. Only the "kingdom of God within" can really rule; only the Soul can be victorious; only the child of the Spirit can escape death.

To Woman, gentle, faithful, but resolute in her determination to resist the enthroned powers of darkness in church and state, which may arise to crucify her, is committed the great issue of the future. She will drink of the cup of sorrows of which he who was forsaken of all men, tasted; she will enter the Gethsemane which sees a sleeping world, and knows no light but that which comes from an angel-presence; her claims to redeem will form the subject of jest, derision, and scorn, and as she is lifted up on the cross of the verdict of the hour, she will know how pitiless human hearts and tongues can be concerning that gospel which she alone can teach, and which of all others should be most welcome. But what of this? The sufferings of the world are a thousandfold more deep, and endure from age to age, and even though it reject for the moment the saving knowledge which woman offers, she is nevertheless the voice through which its woes are expressed. For when wrongs and sufferings reach a certain height, they become articulate. Those who speak utter the cry of the Soul within multitudes of their fellows, who are dumb. Silently, and unconsciously, they lift their eyes to Woman and place their children at her feet, and she hears with the hearing of the spirit the bitter words of woe which exclaim—"We are perishing in a world which is a Gehenna, because it is without Love!"

Surely, then, the women-reformers of this crucial

epoch must be true to the supreme mission of God which is given to them, and pledge themselves by all that is sacred in the future, to make no compromise with anything that holds womanhood and maternity in subjection. The victory of woman is in her motherhood, and its unknown and transcendent powers. It is through this that she crushes the serpent's head; through this that she overcomes human weakness with Immortality. Let none, therefore, grow faint-hearted, or fear to attack the stronghold of the ancient "curse," for the beautiful dawn of another and grander day is even now on the horizon, and for those who are able to see the first prophetic glimpses of its brightness there is the profound gladness of the knowledge that the glorious light will surely come for others. It will come as man came after the saurian, and the ape; it will come as the spring comes after the long winter; it will come as maturity comes after impulsive youth; it will come as Jesus of Nazareth came with words of peace after the crucifixion of the flesh. For the Soul is the first, and the last, and holds the keys of death and hell, and has the power, given it from eternity, to become supreme over all things, and to "ascend to the Father."

